CONSTRUCTING SOCIAL JUSTICE PEDAGOGY: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON PEDAGOGICAL *PRAXIS* IN THE COMMUNICATION CLASSROOM

by

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A dissertation submitted to the faculty of
The University of Utah
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Communication

The University of Utah

May 2014

The University of Utah Graduate School

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a qualitative examination of the pedagogical practices of communication educators teaching college level courses with the goal of social justice. In particular, I focus on the strategies of self-identified social justice educators to understand what they are labeling *social justice* by examining the documents produced for their courses and interviewing them about their practices. In the analysis, I identify ways that these particular educators define their work as a *way of being* in the world that goes beyond the base requirements for their jobs as well as how they describe it as an ongoing *process* with multiple steps. Additionally, I call attention to the specific manner in which they include social justice pedagogical tools in their communication classrooms and identify commonalities among them. The findings indicate that communication educators working for social justice through their classroom teaching do so by grounding the content material in the framework of a socially constructed reality that has consequences for bodies located at different places in the social hierarchy. This foundation allows them to further explore how the status quo is unequal, leading to *in*justice, and how communication instruction has the potential to impact students' agency and lead to social justice. I close with a discussion of how these findings add to our theoretical understanding of critical pedagogy, social constructionism, and the development of a discipline specific pedagogy for communication studies.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Learning is a social process that takes place within a community. To fully understand the significance of my completion of this project, I acknowledge that community and their continued love and support throughout my educational journey.

My family gives me strength and taught me my first lessons about equity and access. My mother, Linda Mora, was, and continues to be, an inspiration for the way I want to lead my life—caring, happy, positive, accepting, and supportive. My siblings, Dominic, Danielle, Jeffery, and Lauren, are the rest of the peas in my pod and, even though we have gone different directions, I continue to feel connected to you in everything I do.

My friends were pivotal in starting me on this journey, joining me for various parts of it, and constantly cheering me on throughout. The GGGs will always be the conversation group against which all others are measured. You have supported me with your whit and wisdom over the years and the miles that separate us. I love you and would not have been able to do this without all of you. The Divas came along when I needed support for the daily writing and revising process and showed me that the graduate student grind is similar for all of us, regardless of the discipline. The person who deserves the most thanks for being a friend and a guiding light in my own development is Sonya Alemán. She introduced herself to me on the first

day of orientation by explaining that her maiden name was Mora, at which point I put my arm around her and said, "Well then, that makes us sisters!" That is how I have felt ever since.

My professors and mentors from both my Master's and Ph.D. programs were crucial to my success, and each influential in their own way. Dr. Mark Stoner and Dr. Sally Perkins taught the Instructional Communication Theory and Practicum seminars that inspired me to pursue this area of research. Both are incredible teachers and mentors and I value them both for everything that they taught me, and for their continued guidance. Dr. Leah Vande Berg and Dr. Gerri Smith both encouraged me to continue on to graduate study. Leah became my advisor and provided spirit, direction, and counsel until her untimely death. I will never forget her directions to me as she realized that the end was near. She *told* me that I would finish my master's degree and pursue a doctorate and that I should not worry about losing her because I already had everything I needed to be successful. I guess you could say that she was right, but I know that I got a lot of it from her.

My advisor, Ann Darling, provided guidance and support throughout my doctoral program and I am a better writer, teacher, and scholar for it. Danielle Endres, Glen Feighery, Richard Rieke, and Enrique Alemán made up the rest of my committee and each offered their unique perspectives, questions, and challenges in this process. Without their input, I would not have been able to complete this project and I am thankful that they were willing to be a part of it.

My life partner, Jeremy Gordon, also deserves a great deal of thanks for being there throughout this process, for constantly encouraging me, and telling me that I could do it. In some ways my life changed direction when we met. It never occurred to me that I would find someone who was as passionate about teaching or who would be interested in the same field. With you, I don't have to segment my work life from my home life and we can blend the two productively. I stumbled upon this research project because I was trying to find a way to reconcile my being with my work. I found guides for how to make my work a part of my way of being in the world and I found a partner for that in you. I cannot imagine anyone more suited to taking this journey with me and I know that we will continue debating pedagogy on our afternoon walks in the park, trying out new ideas for activities and lessons on each other, and providing nourishment and support when we feel deflated. I could not have done this without you. I love you.

CHAPTER 1

COMMUNICATION, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND PEDAGOGY

"One way to get at a description of social justice is to listen
and explore people's concepts of *in*justice"

—Jo Sprague (personal communication, February 19, 2007)

Introduction

The California State University system (CSU) is the largest public university system in the country and serves the most diverse student body, according to demographic information provided by the CSU website (www.calstate.edu). The city of Sacramento itself consistently ranks among the most ethnically, racially, religiously, and linguistically diverse cities in the United States according to the U.S. Census (www.census.gov). The student population at the California State University, Sacramento, where I began my teaching career, was reflective of these trends. In this environment, I began the journey of becoming a teacher at the college level and developing an attendant teaching philosophy and set of practices. Teaching in this setting included a broad based student population from across campus that was required to take an introductory communication course as part of their degree program. These students were my partners in discovery as I learned about how to teach and they learned about communication. In the 4 years that I

spent teaching in that climate, I learned a great deal about the process of teaching, and about myself as an instructor, from them.

I learned about how they read and responded to the communication course material and how I come across as a dominant member of society in a position of power while teaching it. I learned about what concepts and material they responded to based on their experiences, and about my embodied privilege and underlying assumptions regarding those concepts. I also learned how to relate course concepts to their experiences more appropriately as a result of their social location and their willingness to teach me about life from their perspectives. Ultimately, I learned how much more there was to learn, and how to learn from my mistakes (and there were many).

My experience in that university system and with those students felt typical at the time since I was able to compare notes with the other graduate TAs who were engaged in the same practice. If I had not left that university and student population, I might never have learned how much more there was to know about teaching diverse student populations and the specific issues they face that are built into the higher education system. Continuing my graduate education at a doctoral granting institution with a significantly different student population has provided me the opportunity to see the structure of higher education differently. The University of Utah has a predominantly homogenous student population made up of mostly White[1] students, a significant number of whom are members of the dominant religious culture in the region. My experiences teaching these students

[1] Throughout this project, "white" is capitalized in accordance with APA guidelines when it references a racial group.

provided stark contrast to the work that I engaged in with my students in California. For example, my previous experiences had stimulated me to think about equality and access to education as well as to question and disarticulate stereotypes of diverse student populations, of which I am a part. I developed a stance that took for granted that the purpose of education was to work for greater equality for all students. However, the experiences I had with new students in different contexts showcased how their existence in more insular conditions allowed stereotypes to stand and did not take the same unquestioned position that I now did on matters of privilege and marginalization.

In this new teaching environment, one of the orienting themes in my department was on education for social justice. The underlying assumption being that the structure of higher education is not currently *just* for all students and that the responsibility of those in academia is to use their research for advancing this purpose. As a guiding principle, this concept appealed to me given my rapidly shifting conceptions of students, teaching, social equity and inequity. The question I began, and continue, to ponder is *how*? How does one go about developing pedagogy and teaching for social justice? Once I began to consider this question, dozens of others became relevant as well. For instance, what does social justice pedagogy mean, and who is social justice pedagogy for? How do we know social justice pedagogy when we see it? Are there people who are engaged in the practice of doing it? If so, how do they engage the process? What choices have they made to develop the pedagogical practice of it? How do they implement it in their classrooms? How can we theorize this practice as a result?

These questions stimulate me as I continue to develop my own pedagogical position as well as a program of research. Reading material at the intersections of communication, education, and pedagogy has given me insight into recent theoretical perspectives about education and teaching in more socially responsible ways. The background in instructional theory, experiential education, and critical pedagogy I received planted the seeds of a critical perspective, but discussions of how to apply this perspective in actual classrooms have nurtured and stimulated it. From here, my project is first an attempt to synthesize the pedagogical work being done in the area of communication education for the goal of social justice. Only after exploring the terrain of current practice can I hope to theorize the tenets of a critical pedagogy of social justice in communication. With these goals in mind, the following sections outline the research problem for the current study, review the literature relevant to the project from the education and communication disciplines, and provide an overview of the entire study.

Research Problem

The Western States Communication Association annual conference in February of 2007 featured the theme of social justice in communication scholarship. The same association featured a theme of activism and the application of our social justice perspectives in our work the following year (2008), and used the theme of communication and power for the conference in 2010. Conversations within certain areas of the field have begun to include social justice along with the related concepts of privilege, marginality, oppression, whiteness, and White supremacy (see Frey &

Carraggee, 2007; Martin & Davis, 2001; Warren, 1999). These conversations are informed by the inclusion of critical scholarship into areas of the field that have traditionally relied on postpositivist and interpretivist paradigms. This shift has also been informed by interdisciplinary work with other fields tackling the same issues (for example education, sociology, theater, and journalism), and as a result of socioeconomic and political conditions in the broader society. With the election of Barack Obama as the 44th President of the United States, and the ensuing national conversation about issues of race and racism, the concept of social justice is both timely and relevant. Also, while there are a number of terms mentioned in relation to social justice, it is most often linked to issues of race, White privilege, and equality. The potential conflation of these terms serves to obscure what kinds of things social justice refers to (gender, class, sexuality, age, ability, etc.), and what it means in relation to those things (equity, access, equality, opportunity, etc.). For these reasons, there is a need to engage in research that maps the project of social justice in the field of communication. More specifically, as our regional conference presentations can attest, the focus of this work is on how we are conceiving of social justice and applying it in our predominant interaction with society—through the students we teach. Therefore, my project is an attempt to articulate and theorize a critical pedagogy of social justice in communication classrooms.

The continuing conversation regarding equity and access in U.S. classrooms calls our attention to systems of inequity that pervade academia from K-12 through higher education. In order to contribute to this conversation, we need more knowledge about the kinds of pedagogical work people are doing in higher

education to address inequity and advance social justice. In fact, it is paramount that we understand how social justice is invoked in communication pedagogy and what it means to determine whether it is being used as a means for addressing inequity, or if it is used to mean something else entirely. For instance, does social justice pedagogy mean that the instructor operates from a perspective that all students deserve an equitable educational experience, or does it mean that racism, sexism, ableism, heterosexism and other "-isms" are consciously and carefully introduced and challenged in classroom interactions, or is it some combination of the two? The nebulous definitions of the terms related to social justice and the temptation to conflate them means that we may think we are talking about similar concepts and then find out later that we are not. For example, McDonald and Zeichner (2009) in their examination of teacher education programs that purport to prepare teachers to teach for social justice explain that,

> The lack of clarity in the field at large about what constitutes social justice teacher education and the lack of knowledge regarding the practices that support such an effort make it possible for institutions with differing perspectives, political agendas, and strategies to lay claim to the same vision of teacher preparation. (p. 595)

Because the term social justice has gained currency at a rapid pace in recent years, it has been used to describe everything from the kind of perspective scholars' hold, to the kind of teaching practice they engage in, and the kind of research they produce. In this political-historical moment, while the concept is gaining traction and being applied to research and teaching in different areas, I argue that it becomes necessary to examine the way that it is used to describe pedagogy, what it means in this usage, and how these scholar-teachers think it is working. Because the term is

invoked with some regularity in the field, it would be useful to understand what it means and how it is implemented from the viewpoint of the particularly skilled practitioner. Especially since this could provide insight into the perspective and choices these educators have made and how those are introduced to the classroom. This research also offers a natural place to move outward from the experiences of the practitioner to theorize the composition of a critical pedagogy of social justice in communication. Most importantly, I argue that we should investigate this process for how we might then apply or complicate, add to or begin, a richer conversation about theories of social justice and the pedagogical practices they assume.

The goals of this study were threefold: (1) to gain a richer, more contextualized, and more complex insight of pedagogy developed for social justice in the field of communication from the people who have self-identified in the process of doing it; as well as (2) gaining background knowledge about their experiences in the process of developing their own social justice pedagogical perspective, and their experiences applying it in the classroom; in order to (3) outline a theoretical model for the development of a critical pedagogy of social justice in communication. This study focused specifically on identifying the elements in and use of a critical pedagogy of social justice in classroom teaching practice from the perspective of the self-identified practitioner. Exploration of these instructors' pedagogy helped inform me about the crucial elements in the development of social justice pedagogy in communication. For instance, how the use of a social justice perspective towards pedagogy made use of traditional pedagogical tools for social justice purposes.

Because we do not have a taxonomy or definition of social justice education in the field of communication currently, and because there is a movement towards incorporating it into research and the curriculum in higher education (although some would argue that we should avoid the confines of creating one definition; see Pearce, 2006), I argue that this research study was a necessary first step in mapping the terrain of social justice pedagogy from the perspective of those who are engaged in the practice of doing it. To be sure, this exploration of social justice pedagogy was not aimed at taking agency from contemporary social justice educators. Rather, my exploration is a beginning to the larger conversation within the field about what it includes and how it plays out in practice. It serves as a jumping off point for a richer, fuller, contextual, and more nuanced conversation about how a critical pedagogy of social justice in communication can be theorized and actualized. With these goals in mind, I devised the following research questions:

- RQ1: How do social justice educators in the field of communication think and talk about their work?
- RQ2: How do these communication educators incorporate social justice into their pedagogy?

Review of Literature

Any study of social justice as an orienting framework, or concept, requires an understanding of the definitions that are used to describe and define it as well as a review of the ways that it has been used in previous research. Literature in the fields of education and communication inform this project because of their

emphasis on both the topic of social justice as well as the pedagogy implemented to engage it.

Education Research on Social Justice

Grounding social justice conceptually within education literature requires exploration of some of the more traditional goals of a liberal education. Michelli and Keiser (2005) remind us that public education within the U.S. has four enduring purposes: 1) preparing students to be active, involved participants in democracy; 2) preparing students to have access to knowledge and critical thinking within the disciplines; 3) preparing students to lead rich and rewarding personal lives and to be responsible community members; and 4) preparing students to assume their highest possible place in the economy. These assumptions and foundations require a focus on democracy, and active participation within a democracy, as part of the conversation about making decisions that are just and equitable. Theoretically, the democratic state is founded on the idea of equality and equal representation. While many would argue that this has not happened in American democracy to date, there are still opportunities for the democratic model to inform practice and do the work of social justice in classrooms and society.

In this vein, there are a number of arguments for the inclusion of democracy and citizenship as aspects of social justice and a means for moving towards equity through social change. This focus on democracy becomes important in more nuanced conversations about the structures and politics of a democracy, particularly U.S. democracy, in relation to the law and education. Both of these are

towering structures that impact the governing of the population and can be studied for the effects they produce on both the social consciousness and the perpetuation of inequity. Earley (2005) explained that the power of the government to make legislation governing schooling comes from the clause in the Constitution that requires the government to "provide for the general welfare of its citizens" (p. 34). In this sense, education does not necessarily fall under the heading of things controlled by the government other than in the way that it is considered part of the general welfare of the citizenry. This has led to policy decisions that have shifted the focus of education to an individualistic, market-based education system rather than one that embraces the goal of training active, involved citizens.

Possibly the most notable example of teaching for social change is the work of Freire (1970) and the establishment of critical pedagogy as a movement within education. Critical pedagogy has taken up the notion of active, engaged participation in its call for education that is liberatory and requires students to move from positions of oppression to active participation in democratic states. Building off of Freire's (1970) work, the critical pedagogy movement embraces the notion of a more equitable democracy and works to find ways of disrupting the models that reify and re-inscribe cultural capital and privilege for certain populations through the indoctrination of education.

Freire's major concept of "banking education" as the way that instructors deposit information into passive student recipients served to influence his goals of educating for liberation and connecting knowledge, and knowledge producing structures, to the lived experiences of the student. His seminal work has been

expanded upon in various ways to impact the work of educational scholars and those researching teacher education. One such example that applies to the current project is the work of Parker and Stovall (2004) who examine the ways that critical pedagogy and critical race theory (CRT) can be combined to inform each other and to prepare teachers to teach for social justice. Critical pedagogy is based on a Marxist framework that examines economic and class structures as the primary means of oppression operating within a society. CRT operates from the standpoint that (1) race and racism are primary forms of oppression and that they interact with other areas (like class), (2) the dominant Eurocentric viewpoint with its focus on meritocracy, objectivity and neutrality needs to be challenged, (3) the goal of CRT is social justice, (4) experience in the world is a valid form of knowledge, (5) the process of telling narratives counter to the dominant works to disrupt the status quo, and (6) it draws from interdisciplinary methodological and pedagogical perspectives to provide critique (Solórzano, 1997). Parker and Stovall (2004) argued that the two could be used more effectively together to inform the practice of teacher education through the inclusion of different pedagogical techniques in teacher preparation. One of which is the use of counterstories to stimulate new teachers to examine current racist epistemes within educational settings. The critical pedagogy movement has also occurred in conjunction with and alongside other critical scholarly movements focused on education for social justice in particular.

Among the perspectives and behaviors that teachers can engage in the classroom are those described by different bodies of research that grew out of

critical theory. Wiedeman (2002) surveyed the theories that are most prevalent in educational literature and teacher preparation for what they can all offer to the goal of teaching for social justice. Within these strands are traditional critical theory, antiracist pedagogy, multicultural education, critical race theory (CRT), diversity initiatives, and teacher reform movements. Each of these areas offer different perspectives on the goals of social justice and how to achieve it, but they all agree on issues of race, oppression, marginalization, and a move away from dominant models and ideologies as the focus of their work. The implications of these different strands of research is that, "in order for teachers to work towards principles of democracy and social justice, an anti-racist curriculum should be placed front and center of the process of both teaching and learning" (p. 204). In order to do this, specific pedagogical strategies are needed that provide students the opportunity to, "access knowledge, develop strategies for seeking out and activating resources, and develop skills for critical analysis of oppressive social and educational structures and systems" (p. 203).

Scholars in education have progressed to an understanding of education as a space that is contested for its ability to provide instruction that meets the needs of different student populations. Ladson-Billings (2003) explained the epistemology of Western thought that continues to characterize social institutions, including education, and how it functions to establish racialized discourses and epistemologies that benefit dominant groups to the detriment of marginalized communities. Her position rests on the premise that,

> The conditions under which people live and learn shape their knowledge and their worldviews. The process of developing a worldview that differs from

> the dominant worldview requires active intellectual work on the part of the knower, because schools, society, and the structure and production of knowledge are designed to create individuals who internalize the dominant worldview. (p. 399)

This internalization of the dominant worldview is at issue when discussing how social justice educators develop and implement their pedagogy. Without models for performing "active intellectual work" that interrogates dominant positions and ideologies, it is not likely that students will reach a point where they can critique dominant worldviews. This is where the teacher's use of critical pedagogical techniques for the purpose of social justice becomes necessary.

Teacher preparation includes many different skill sets and abilities that are learned through various means (coursework, student teaching, mentor relationships, etc.). Wiedeman (2002) focused her questions on how social justice and equity are defined, how teacher education policies address these issues, and how teachers are supported towards an orientation of equity and social justice in their teaching. The position of social justice that she works from is Bell's (1997) definition that frames the process as equal participation in a democratic society where members have a degree of self-determination and interdependence and access to equal distribution of resources within the structure. This definition requires that we examine how schools operate as institutions that value some and devalue others through the perspective and behaviors of the instructor.

Initial teacher preparation for primary and secondary teachers differs significantly from that required at the postsecondary level. Teachers at the primary and secondary level must complete course work as well as a field experience located in a school with a supervising teacher. Postsecondary teachers may not be required

to complete any kind of field experience before beginning the work of teaching at the college level. Brown (2005) examined a service-learning route to teacher preparation that placed new teachers in the classrooms of experienced teachers for the purpose of engaging in service-learning projects for the benefit of the school and students. Her findings were that this form of teacher preparation provided opportunities for teacher candidates to evaluate and assess current practices from veteran teachers and apply them to their own goals of teaching for social justice. This model operates on the idea that exposure to content matter which explores systemic inequity in schools can be supplemented with observation and interaction in actual settings that will work to reinforce the concepts and prepare new teachers to engage them in their own classrooms. While this model is described specifically for training teachers who are going into secondary education, it has the potential to be applied to teacher training for social justice at other levels as well.

Another model that is useful in teacher preparation was developed by Schmidt (1998) and focuses on the ABCs of cultural understanding and communication. This model is dubbed a cultural literacy model where the ABCs are designed to engage students in activities that will expose them to members of different cultures with the express goal of stimulating awareness, appreciation, and a better understanding of difference. What makes this model unique is the structure and progression of the tasks. The "A" stands for autobiography and is designed to be a story that the students write about themselves in order to explore their own racial and ethnic identities. This is followed by a biography ("B") of another person who was initially judged to be different from the student and this difference could

be based on any number of things from phenotype to religious background. Lastly, the "C" portion of the model engages students in cross-cultural analysis where aspects of the culture of the student and the other participants are compiled, arranged, and grouped to show similarity and difference that sparks discussion about the myths and stereotypes surrounding the other. While this model does not specifically address teaching for social justice as the goal, it is designed to aid teacher candidates in exploring multiculturalism. Possible extensions could include a greater focus on self-reflexivity and interrogation of dominant social norms. Given a more sensitive climate to issues related to race, ethnicity, oppression and marginalization, this research from education provides a number of examples currently absent from communication education literature and offers guidance for how to conduct research that will fill this gap.

Social Justice and Communication Research

In the field of communication, the conversation about social justice is currently gaining momentum and appearing within the context of rhetorical theory, performance studies, applied communication, and communication education. Recent volumes specifically devoted to the topic include perspectives on social justice and communication research (Swartz, 2006) as well as communication research and activism (Frey & Carragee, 2007). One of the overarching critiques of this proliferation is that within this myriad compilation of scholarship, there is no unifying definition for social justice, and some would argue that this definition is desperately needed. Artz (2006) explained that we have a lively community of

scholars who are self-identified and committed to the project of social change, but who do not share similar unifying perspectives of what that change necessarily must include or the ways in which to go about it.

This is not to say that there is only one way to go about producing social change, but that there are a wide array of things that seem to be described as, or could fall under the heading of, a social justice perspective without a clearly articulated taxonomy of similar concepts between them. For instance, a great deal of the literature across different areas within the field makes use of terms and concepts to describe the kind of work being conducted. This could include "engaged scholarship" (Cheney, Wilhelmsson, & Zorn, 2002), "critical scholarship" (Sprague, 1992), or "activist scholarship" (Frey, & Carragee, 2007); and can also include different terms related to social justice like "equity" (Crenshaw, 1997), "oppression" (McKerrow, 1989), "marginalization" (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995), "dominant positions" (Wander, 1983), "diversity" (Martin & Davis, 2001), "multiculturalism" (Casmir, 1991), "postcolonialism" (Shome, 1996), and "power" (Sprague, 1992) to name a few. While all of this research could be labeled social justice in some ways, this categorization or placement requires that we cast a wide net with our definition of what social justice includes, which may not be useful to the development of pedagogy. What this presents on the surface is a great deal of literature in different areas that are all engaged with some aspect or another of the larger critical project of social justice, but not coherently grouped as social justice scholarship per se. In order to focus specifically on the research that has been conducted utilizing the term social justice for the purpose of identifying the aspects that relate to communication

pedagogy, this section explores the literature produced under the banner of social justice scholarship in communication for what is included and where gaps remain. The ultimate goal of this project is to produce research that fills some of these gaps in our understanding of what social justice means for communication scholars and, more importantly, how it is enacted in our pedagogy.

As Cooks (2003) explains, social justice is an abstract and indefinite concept, but that has not stopped people from trying to engage in doing the work or producing the scholarship that will enact social justice. While it is abstract, there are some who have chosen to codify a definition for the work that they produce. One example is from Bradley (1996), who described social justice as,

> The direction and shaping of society's laws and institutions (e.g., the economy, medical care, social systems, unemployment insurance, etc.) to achieve an equal level of fairness and just treatment for all members of a society; a system in which just conduct within a society toward all members of that society is guided by moral principles of truth, reason, justice and fairness. (p. 373)

It is this desire for equity and equal participation that makes social justice a heady and desirable goal. It is also a difficult and wide-ranging goal in that social justice applies to multiple levels of society and any attempt to work in this direction requires acknowledgement of the social *in*justice that occurs in varying degrees and with differential outcomes at each level.

To address this, Swartz (2005) focused his perspective of social justice at a higher level of abstraction and explained that his goal is the creation of a world where "humans cease being cruel to one another" and where people extend their "moral imaginations and learn to extend to everyone the benefits of civilization" (p. 111). He continued by explaining what that means in terms of social justice as the

availability of food, shelter, education, health care, and the chance to explore self-potential that everyone is entitled to without exception. This approach to social justice states,

> Social justice is most possible when all people have the maximum freedom to talk about who they are as a society; what they do as citizens, consumers and workers; and how they envision their future. Fundamental to that freedom is our ability as researchers and teachers to offer the young men and women of the United States an opportunity to rethink their moral identities and realign their political commitments to support policies that advance social justice. (Swartz, 2006, p. ix)

Here the discussion focuses on what might best be termed the concept of *access* to the material, social, and esteem needs of human beings. It also includes a focus on the mechanism for producing such a society by linking social justice concerns to the classrooms where academics have the potential to impact students. This position offers a more holistic approach to thinking about the problem of social *in*justice in U.S. American contexts that is useful for expanding the definition of social justice from the perspective of communication research.

The area of applied communication research has engaged in a focused, specific conversation about social justice in relation to pedagogy and research. In 1996, following a comprehensive curriculum re-design, a group of scholars from Loyola University Chicago published the results of their efforts and advocated for a communication approach to social justice pedagogy and research. Frey, Pearce, Pollack, Artz, and Murphy (1996) opened by noting that,

> Some of our colleagues in the communication discipline have channeled their energies and resources toward challenging the norms, practices, relations, and structures that underwrite inequality and injustice. Their approach can best be described in terms of *social justice*, the engagement with and advocacy for those in our society who are economically, socially, politically, and/or culturally underresourced. (p. 110)

Here, they articulate a definition of what social justice is in relation to its opposite, social *in*justice, and more importantly, what social justice research does as a result. As they describe it, their position developed as a result of their project in creating a social justice concentration for their undergraduate curriculum at a Jesuit university, which focuses on service—mainly to the poor—as an aspect of their religious educational mission. Using the Jesuit framework for service and the mantra of the university, these scholars aimed to formulate a curriculum that helped develop a *sensibility* for social justice in their students without producing a limiting singular definition for what social justice entails. This focus allowed them to make some statements about the nature of social justice, such as that it "weaves together several strands of intellectual, moral, and social tradition"; and articulates a sensibility that: "1) foregrounds ethical concerns, 2) commits to structural analysis of ethical problems, 3) adopts an activist orientation, and 4) seeks identification with others" (p. 111).

In response to this articulation of a social justice approach to communication research, concerns surfaced about using this definition for measuring what is, and what is not, research engaged with social justice. For example, Wood (1996) claimed that communication research is already actively engaged with these kinds of issues, and that much of the research conducted in communication as a field applies to the ends of social justice. Her argument was grounded in the examples of research studies aimed at different aspects of various social issues from sexual harassment to violence between intimates. This position warns against ignoring the body of research on social *in*justice being conducted in the field. Alternatively,

Makau (1996) argued that a social justice approach to communication education pedagogy should be cautious in its claim to develop a social justice sensibility because it rests on the assumption that everyone knows what social justice is. Her argument continued by stating that it would be beneficial to ground the teaching of social justice in a moral framework. In this way, scholars trying to instill this sensibility will have a basis for doing so in moral behavior.

In response, Pollack, Artz, Frey, Pearce, and Murphy (1996) agreed there was a lot of good research being conducted from a moral perspective and on communities suffering from certain conditions, but they maintained that social justice research is not just *about* these populations, but *for* and *with* them as well. It is this move that, they argued, characterizes social justice research since it moves from the theoretical or abstract, to the grounded and particular experiences of those suffering from social ills. In this debate, the landscape of social justice was further defined as requiring that research impact the immediate participants or community that is being researched. This also characterizes the current move into activist scholarship underway in other applied communication research (see Frey & Carragee, 2007).

This debate also helped to further the conversation about the goals of social justice research in communication. As Pearce (2006) recalled, there were specific reasons for leaving the definition of social justice open and flexible because, "had we engaged in a debate about what social justice is, we would have moved our project, and the students for whom it was intended, from the realm of action to the realm of contemplation, and in so doing rendered it much less likely to accomplish the goals

we had for it" (p. 224). His position is well taken and provides a cautionary note for current research into social justice pedagogy. It was not my intention to nail down what is and is not social justice, but to gather the specific examples of pedagogy from practitioners doing the work in order to outline a discursive field of possibilities for social justice as it relates to the development and implementation of communication pedagogy.

Pearce's (2006) position also solidified a portion of the conversation about social justice as action-oriented, and grounded it in the engagement of scholars with topics and populations. Olsen and Olsen (2003) warned that this requirement of immediate action might prompt a shortsighted solution to a complex problem rather than one that was a result of longitudinal study and reflection simply to meet the requirement of being considered social justice research by this definition. The issues brought forth by this debate are useful indicators of the contemporary conversations surrounding social justice research currently, in the area of applied communication specifically, and the field of communication more broadly.

This coalition of topics is designed to apply communication research for a socially beneficial purpose. While this fulfills the mission of the charter for a communication approach to social justice research laid out by Frey et al. (1996), there are still a number of areas that have yet to be explored. For example, the goal of positive social change for the communities impacted is foregrounded throughout. What is not as clear is how social change and social justice should be understood in relation to one another within this research. For example, is all research conducted with the goal of advocating or effecting social change considered social justice

research, or is that label reserved for studies that take on broader topics which impact marginalized, nondominant populations as a whole (i.e., poverty, racism, sexism, heteronormativity, etc.)? These questions, although pertinent on their own, are even more important within another subset of communication research—communication education. The next section explores the movement for social justice in the way we teach our discipline specific material.

Communication Education for Social Justice

The areas of instructional communication (IC) and communication education (CE) both fall under the larger umbrella of communication in instruction. Staton (1989) described both IC and CE as part of this larger area of communication in instruction and explained some of the key terms that relate to each. According to her definitions, learning is the process of acquiring new information, teaching is the process of assisting another to learn, and communication is the process of creating shared meanings between teachers and students. Each of these concepts has a role to play in both areas, and while both areas have a distinct focus, they also share some important areas of overlap. In brief, CE is the study of how we teach the discipline of *communication* and IC is the use of communication in teaching *all subjects*.

CE is as old as the field of communication and has always been concerned with the specific methods and strategies for teaching communication, most traditionally, teaching speech. This area is characterized by development of the most effective examples, representations, cases, and methods for teaching the skills

of public speaking and listening (Book, 1989; Sprague, 1990). CE is also of relevance and concern to all individuals teaching speech and communication as the focus is on developing more effective methods for teaching the discipline. The kinds of questions posed by CE scholars are those that are focused on the best ways to teach communication related content and have proliferated in recent years as the field has expanded to focus on more than just speech education. That is what makes this project useful within the larger body of CE research. My goals were to explore the ways that self-identified social justice educators are engaged in the process of teaching our discipline in all of its variety. This exploration will impact the kinds of cases, examples, methods, and strategies that are available in teaching from this perspective.

The critical turn in CE has progressed in fits and starts since the early 1990s when Sprague (1992; 1993) published two articles calling for more critical perspectives in both IC and CE research. Her arguments were based on the body of research that had been compiled thus far and highlighted the need to examine our research from a critical theory informed position. Here, she referred to a number of issues prevalent in critical theory including the balance of power in the classroom, the ways that curriculum decisions are made, the roles and activities that teachers engage in, and the reasons for education conducted through schools. These articles still stand as the clarion call for taking a more critical approach to research in communication and instruction.

Swartz (1997) participated in this critical turn and proposed an extensive re-articulation of the basic communication course by providing an argument for

modeling it on basic composition courses that have already incorporated the perspectives of critical theory. He argued that in order to make use of a critical pedagogy, the basic course would need to be concerned with the roles of authority and teacher influence in the classroom, which would require exposing students to the language and history of critical theory. He defined critical pedagogy in departments of communication as: "The process of helping students to identify and critique the ways language reifies and structures human social reality for the purpose of empowering students to engage more actively in both the construction and critique of society" (p. 137). He continued by noting that the reason for engaging in communication research is "to improve our effectiveness as teachers in the public sphere" and that, "being politically active with our research entails being more pedagogically active in *applying* our research" (p, 138). Here, he echoes the perspective of Frey et al. (1996) in calling for application of the things that research produces, but he specifically focuses on doing that through our pedagogy and teaching—or communication education. Further, Swartz (1997) argued that,

> We, as scholars, produce research informing others about the effects and influences of communication and ideas in society. Implicit in this critical notion of scholarship is an emphasis on "advocacy." By informing and teaching with our research, we act as persuaders in the public arena. (p. 138)

It is this role as persuaders in the public arena, where he argues communication scholars have the most impact. This impact can be magnified when we take into account the goals of teaching students how to engage in these practices as well. Swartz (1997) continued by arguing that,

> The function of education is not only to aid students in gaining knowledge for life; it is, more substantially *strategic knowledge about how to live*… education is knowledge *about* knowledge, about teaching students what it means to

> "know"…and education allows for our successful grappling with "reality." (p. 141)

This position represents a clear link between our research and our teaching and explains that we should use the results of our study to improve our pedagogical practice. In this vein, the current study explored how educators are doing that in relation to social justice pedagogy, and how an exploration of that pedagogy can be used to advance theory.

Further research on CE and our pedagogy produced a special issue of *Communication Education*, the journal devoted to the topics of communication and instruction, on race, culture, and gendered identities in the classroom. Articles in this special issue included critical perspectives on antiracist pedagogy (Giroux, 2003), as well as identity negotiations and critical progressive pedagogy (Hendrix, Jackson II, & Warren, 2003), and the ways that gendered and raced identities interact to make the classroom a transformative and/or resistive space (Johnson & Bhatt, 2003). The conversations in this special issue engaged the ways that gender, race, positionality, and performance are a part of communication classrooms and the ways that CE research could study and make sense of them. Overall, this special issue laid the groundwork for a number of issues found in conversations about and for social justice in communication education.

As the conversation about research in applied communication research above noted, there are a wide variety of perspectives about what constitutes appropriate topics for social justice research. These differences are immediately recognizable in this special issue as some articles focus on race exclusively while others examine the intersections of race and gender. One article looks at these

issues through the lens of a class on interracial communication while another examines them from the perspective and position of whiteness. Each employs some measure of a critically informed perspective on CE and extends the conversation about topics that we teach in our discipline and the best ways to teach them given the diversity of perspectives and positionalities of the students and teachers involved. This special issue invited further research on these topics as a major thread in CE research, but as yet, there has been limited engagement of these topics through the medium of this specific journal, or in other published conversations of these topics within the field. That is what makes this project valuable as an extension of the conversation about social justice in communication education—what it includes and how it is being taught.

Another entry into this conversation about education for social justice comes through the discussion of teaching about whiteness in relation to specific areas within communication. Martin and Davis (2001) explain the connections between intercultural communication as an area within the discipline and the development and instantiation of White privilege in the United States. As they explain it, the study of intercultural communication began after WWII when the government needed to train diplomats for service overseas with cultural others, typically in Asia. This established the dichotomy between "Americans" and "Others" and resulted in helping establish the White male norm in society by conflating the position of the White male with being "an American," while everyone else became a cultural Other. They also outline several pedagogical strategies for making White a cultural category and disarticulating it from an American nationalist identity. They argue

that this is necessary in order to educate our mostly White students about culture more broadly than as specific groups of others while leaving White as the normal, or "just human" category. Again, this focus on teaching whiteness is not specifically labeled a social justice approach, but incorporates a clear perspective on White privilege, race, and racism, and so could certainly be related to the larger project of pedagogy for social justice.

The following are further examples of the different types of research that have been (and continue to be) conducted on or about whiteness and how it has been applied to communication scholarship. Warren (1999) characterized four different categories of study on the topic: the nature of whiteness and what privileges it accords; whiteness as it is played out in film and media as a "norm"; whiteness as a rhetorical location and how language creates this position; and the ways that whiteness is a performance. The first area includes what Thompson (personal communication, September 9, 2007) calls the individual understandings and experiences with whiteness and is characterized by localized examples of individuals coming to the recognition of their privilege. This has been explored further by Warren and Hytten (2004) who categorized different "faces" of whiteness as individuals come to a recognition of their respective positions of privilege.

In media and film studies, the focus on whiteness plays out in examinations of the representations that are depicted and how the category of White is consistently shown as the norm, or the norm that should be aspired to (Dyer, 1997). Studies of whiteness as a rhetorical location have been conducted by Nakayama and Krizek (1995), Crenshaw (1997), and Olmsted (1999). Nakayama and Krizek

(1995) focused on whiteness as a strategic rhetoric and one that is constructed to reinforce a position of power by denying White as a color, linking it to nationality and biology. Crenshaw (1997) explored how whiteness operates in a space of rhetorical silence and showed how the underlying premise of a White racial norm played out in debates between state representatives about the Daughters of the American Revolution and their application to use the confederate flag as a symbol. This debate hinged on the construction of the confederate flag as a symbol of slavery and oppression by the South and the fact that is was being associated with a nonprofit group that was sanctioned by this petition to use the symbol for their organization. Here, whiteness operated in the debate as an underlying factor that essentially stated there was no problem with these women using this symbol because it is "harmless" and they do good works for society. Crenshaw brings this invisible nature of the White norm to the surface within the debate by focusing on how detractors are seen as extremists who are trying to stifle the work of these charitable, good-hearted (White) women.

Studies examining the performance of whiteness have been influenced by Butler's (1990) conceptions of gender as a performance, or a stylized repetition of acts. Performance scholars have begun to examine whiteness as a stylized performance of repeated acts that define, reinforce, and perpetuate whiteness. Examples of this are seen in Warren (2001) where he examined the role-playing of students in an introductory performance and communication class when they are asked to enact performances of "Others." This research illuminates the ways that White and non-White bodies are both implicated in performances of whiteness

because of their recognition and co-optation of these different stylized acts. Finally, Thompson (personal communication, September 9, 2007) also emphasized a focus in whiteness studies upon institutions that participate in the perpetuation of the White norm. Education is seen as the primary socializing system in society and one that has consistently been implicated in the reproduction of whiteness. Bergerson (2003) described the focus of research here on how the institution engages in this reproduction through socialization of incoming students and what affect this has on students of color entering higher education. In all of these examples, whiteness is linked to unequal social positions occupied by the members in society as a result, and is therefore implied in the larger social justice project. After all, it would be unlikely to advance a successful program of justice for all without examining the structure of whiteness that holds up inequality in the first place.

Communication, as a discipline, is uniquely suited to engaging issues of social justice through classroom interaction because of the focus on language use and discourse and the fact that human beings use language to constitute and create their lived reality (Sprague, 1999). Johnson (2004) argued for a communication perspective on social justice by stating that the content matter within communication courses deals specifically with the ethical and moral elements of human interaction, therefore, "we should teach our students to communicate in ways that resist and transform power inequalities" (p. 146). The model that she employs is one that makes use of universal instructional design (UID), a process developed for students with special needs that is aimed at the inclusion of all students into the larger curriculum. She adapts these principles to a social justice

framework for inclusion in her model and designs course material and activities from this standpoint with the goal of altering dominant structures.

> If educators are structuring classroom interactions so that diverse student needs are being met, *and* students are engaged in the decision making process about how they will learn, teacher authority is redefined from an absolute source of power requiring student passivity to an identity that is continually (re)constructed *with* students as all classroom participants navigate the learning environment together (Johnson, 2004, p. 147).

The goal of this format for teaching is to "critique the power imbalances that systematically oppress particular people" so that "we can transform the discursive and otherwise material realities of oppression" (p. 147).

Thus far, in communication education research, the influx of critical perspectives has begun a conversation about how we teach the discipline of communication and has coalesced around specific topics that relate to the project of social justice including intercultural communication, identity, race, racism, and whiteness. However, what remains are spaces that could be filled with a more comprehensive conversation about a critical pedagogy of social justice in the field. Martin and Davis (2001) specifically addressed pedagogy for teaching about whiteness, Johnson (2004) explained a model for incorporating these topics into the curriculum, and Warren (2001) described a performance pedagogy in the same vein, but there are few other examples of how to identify and implement the specific topics, methods, cases, and activities of teaching communication from a social justice perspective in CE literature. Nor have there been many attempts to theorize this process.

One exception is the perspective of critical communication pedagogy offered by Fassett and Warren (2007). They take critical communication pedagogy to mean

"efforts by people concerned with education to embrace profound ideological difference and socioeconomic context as constitutive of what happens in schools and classrooms" (p. 26). By doing this, the backgrounds and experiences of the students and teachers become a part of the educational setting and are viewed as factors impacting the teaching and learning process. Further, Fassett and Warren (2007) stated,

> A critical pedagogical perspective invites instructional communication scholars to situate their inquiry in relation to larger, macro socio-cultural, socioeconomic structures, to explore the ways in which racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression permeate classrooms and research on classrooms, teachers, and students. (p. 27)

Through their description of this approach to teaching communication, they outline a set of commitments that critical communication pedagogy adheres to in order to guide practice. They are that (1) identity is constituted in communication; (2) power is understood as fluid and complex; (3) culture is central, not additive; (4) mundane communication practices are constitutive of larger social structural systems; (5) social, structural critique places mundane communication practices in a meaningful context; (6) language, and the analysis of it as constitutive of social phenomena, is central; (7) reflexivity is an essential condition; (8) pedagogy and research are praxis; (9) human subjectivity and agency are understood as nuanced and complex; and (10) dialogue is engaged as both metaphor and method for relationships with others (Fassett & Warren, 2007).

By beginning with their own experiences and examining them through autoethnography, Fassett and Warren (2007) established critical communication pedagogy as that which engages the complex topics of oppression and inequality in

their classrooms. The focus on language and symbolic behavior as the means through which societal structures of inequality are built provides a discipline specific approach to the material in our field. This perspective also establishes critical communication pedagogy as a means for working toward social justice. Indeed, Fassett and Warren claim that "critical communication pedagogy is social justice, as defined, explored and implemented within a community of caring and generous believers in freedom, and justice, and love—for all, all the time" (p. 128). However, they also warn that,

> Specific acts, specific interactions, localized moments are not, in and of themselves, critical communication pedagogy. They are, in their best light, moments in which students and teachers are able to grasp difficult concepts, engage in complex ideas, and reflect on their own implications within systems of power [....] These moments and activities never, by themselves, do the work of critical communication pedagogy; they never, isolated from the larger context of educational practice, subvert anything. (Fassett & Warren, 2007, p. 115)

This process-oriented description shifts the focus from specific activities and classroom set-ups, to a broader understanding of what critical education means, what kind of inquiry it includes, and how it functions. In this way, critical communication pedagogy establishes a philosophical approach to education rather than a programmatic set of activities.

This perspective is the most consonant with a critical pedagogy of social justice that this study explored. What is not clear in research on social justice and pedagogy in communication is whether this framework, as described, is influential in the development of the social justice pedagogy employed by self-identified practitioners, or whether these educators depend on other perspectives entirely. Critical communication pedagogy builds from a Freirean foundation and includes

emphasis on generative themes, engagement through dialogue, and a praxis approach including both reflection and action. This has been true of a number of perspectives on critical education across the spectrum in various fields and as such remains the theoretical grounding for this study. Critical pedagogy, inspired by the broader tenets of critical theory, and the contextual explorations of Freire, Shor, Giroux, and others, is implicated in much of the literature that purports to be examining social justice pedagogy.

As evidenced by Fassett and Warren (2007), critical pedagogy, specific to communication, is necessary for social justice to occur. However, the specific links between critical philosophical perspectives and pedagogy in those self-identified as working for social justice in communication have yet to be theorized in broader terms. What also remains at issue is whether specific educators work from perspectives that do not include critical pedagogy even when social justice is their goal. The movement in communication education is towards social justice. The roots of this movement are loosely correlated and under-theorized. This study steps into the breach and explores the nature of the pedagogy being developed to add theoretical anchoring.

Overview of the Research Project

In what follows, I provide a brief description of the major arguments and findings from this project as well as an overview of each chapter. In Chapter 2, I

outline the theoretical frameworks that have grounded this study. Since I am interested in how communication educators advance their pedagogy for social justice, I rely heavily on critical pedagogy as an orienting perspective. This perspective is particularly useful when examining classroom spaces where liberation is the goal. Social justice goals of equity and access for all, all the time, fall into this category of liberatory goals which is why critical pedagogy informs my exploration of them. In addition, the social constructionist perspective of communication as the process whereby we create and inhabit social worlds also provides insight into how communication educators are creating classroom spaces where social justice can be the goal. Together, these theoretical frames inform this project and are described in more detail in the next chapter.

In Chapter 3, I outline the methodological framework used to gather and analyze the data for this study. My goals for this project were exploratory since little published research has addressed social justice pedagogy in communication studies currently. Therefore, I describe the interpretivist stance with which I approached the data as well as the type of data I collected to answer my research questions. I gathered documents and conducted interviews as my data set and used open coding and the constant comparative technique to analyze them.

The next two chapters comprise my analysis of the collected data. Chapter 4 explores how social justice educators in the field of communication think and talk about their work. More specifically, I introduce their overarching conceptions of the work that they perform as well as several metaphors that they use to describe their approach to social justice pedagogy. Chapter 5 delves deeply into their specific

pedagogical practices to unveil their discipline-specific approach for teaching communication content with a social justice perspective. Here, I illustrate the specific grammars participants use to socially construct the learning space of a social justice classroom.

In the final chapter, I conclude with a discussion of the characteristic commonalities across participants' approaches to incorporating social justice into their pedagogy. From these findings, I offer insights into how this study helps advance our understanding of the theories of critical pedagogy and social constructionism by providing grounded examples of the processes that participants reported using to incorporate social justice into their pedagogy. I close with a discussion of the limitations of this project, the lingering questions I still have about how to engage in communication pedagogy for social justice, some thoughts about where this research might benefit other scholars and how it could inform teacher preparation in communication studies. Now, I proceed to a discussion of the theoretical frames for this study.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS: CONSTRUCTING A PEDAGOGY FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

> To exist, humanely, is to *name* the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new *naming*. Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection. But while to say the true word—which is work, which is praxis—is to transform the world, saying that word is not the privilege of some few persons, but the right of everyone. Consequently, no one can say a true word alone—nor can she say it *for* another, in a prescriptive act which robs others of their words.
>
> ~Freire, 1970

The first time I can remember feeling a sense of unease about my gendered social position was in grade school. In Mrs. Spomer's 5th grade class when I stated that it seemed strange that all of the pronouns were "he" and not "she," she told me not to worry because the "male generic pronoun referred to both genders." Still, I was worried. Then I asked if books written by women used "he" instead of "she" and she replied that many did because of the standard conventions of writing. I was

not quite sure about the "standard conventions of writing," but I was sure that when we learned how to diagram sentences we learned to identify when grammar was being used correctly and incorrectly and *we* would have been marked incorrect if we used the wrong pronoun to refer to a male or female. I was also confused because it seemed to me that there was ample opportunity for an *even* amount of "he" and "she" because there were an *even* number of boys and girls in my class and we had to count off for any activity to make sure that there were *even* numbers of people on each team. Plus, anytime classroom jobs were assigned there were an *even* number of boys and girls chosen for each task, so this one-sided pronoun use seemed very *uneven*.

As time went on, there were other examples of differentiation throughout my schooling—being tracked into classes that were not college prep; being told that girls took Home Economics and boys took Woodshop; being assigned Spanish as my foreign language—that indicated a different set of rules for me when compared to some of my peers[1]. However, it was not until the first semester of my MA program when I read Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and began learning about critical pedagogy that I found a language to explain what I had experienced in numerous little ways throughout my life. I immediately recognized the "banking model" of education to which I had been subject and could begin to name the moments in my life when I had been coded by my gender, race, and class status as

[1] In the small agricultural community where I lived the majority of residents were farmers, ranchers, or migrant workers. There was only one school that served K-8, so I had to go to the neighboring town to attend high school. My last name indicated a Latina/o background and I was tracked into lower level courses as a result of assumptions made about my academic ability solely based on my surname and the small town (and school) I came from.

being either capable or incapable for different academic pursuits. Serendipitously, I was beginning my new career as a graduate teaching associate at the same time I was reading instructional literature and developing an understanding of pedagogy. The enormous weight of my responsibility as the teacher of record for Comm Studies 5, *The Communication Experience*, made me briefly reconsider whether or not I could do the job.

As my panic subsided, I realized that I did not have to teach in the same ways that I had been taught. The literature that I was reading seemed to be saying that there was tremendous latitude for how to enact pedagogy and that there were ongoing debates within the field about which methods were better and worse, how each addressed student needs, and whether or not critical, creative thinking was indeed the goal of education. I had seen firsthand the limiting effects of traditional pedagogy and decided to model my approach after critical scholars with the hope that I could help effect transformative social change in the lives of my students.

Pursuing these goals has led me to the current project of examining the practices of communication scholars teaching for social justice. In this chapter, I outline the theoretical perspectives that inform this study by looking at how they address specific components of the communication classroom. The first section explores what it means to construct a pedagogy followed by sections that examine the purpose of education, how knowledge is constructed, the ways power circulates, and a discussion of how social identities are engaged.

Constituting Pedagogy

Constructing any pedagogy, or method of teaching, begins with the recognition that there are multiple pedagogies to choose from and that no single pedagogy is appropriate for all situations, subjects, students, and circumstances. As Gonzalez Gaudiano and de Alba (1994) put it, "one cannot speak of a *pedagogy* but of *pedagogies* which respond to particular necessities, interests and conditions" (p. 128). Indeed, Gore (1993) explored what she calls the "struggle for pedagogies" beginning with differences in both definitions and conceptions of pedagogy from traditional to radical discourses. She stated that, "most commonly 'pedagogy' is used interchangeably with 'teaching' or 'instruction' referring with various degrees of specificity, to the act or process of teaching" (p. 3). This broad definition encompasses the gamut of ways that teachers have engaged with students from the Classical period to the present but obscures the nuances of each approach that separate them according to their attendant philosophies of education and methods for implementing them. Constructing pedagogy, then, requires an understanding of pedagogy as more than simply a set of practices, but also a mode of interaction based on the assumed goals of the education process.

The classical conception of pedagogy, as the science of teaching children, can be traced to some of the earliest writings of scholar/teachers in rhetoric and communication. Isocrates, Cicero, and Quintilian famously identified their practices for introducing students to material in successive stages in order to properly build upon their knowledge and level of cognitive and personal development. Their methods for doing so included recitation, disputation, and argumentation and were

organized around the content areas of grammar, logic, and rhetoric—the classical trivium (Joseph, 2002). Conversations about the best methods for instructing the young to take their place in a democratic society included an emphasis on what was to be learned, as well as in what order, and how it was to be learned. Here, the methods and strategies used to produce knowledge were linked with the purpose for which such knowledge would be put to use.

Fuhrman and Grasha (1994) reported that this model was similarly manifest in the colonial period of early U.S. higher education but gradually gave way to the traditional model of the 19th century. Influenced by the introduction of the scientific method and the development of the natural sciences, the traditional model of pedagogy rested on the view of learning as transfer from the teacher, as the one who knows, to the student, the one who knows not. Fuhrman and Grasha (1994) further explained this approach in terms of the "pitcher" analogy where the teacher (who is full of knowledge) pours, or transfers it into the students (who are empty vessels) waiting to receive that knowledge. Despite the inclusion of newer methods of teaching (the lecture replaced recitation), the underlying philosophy of teaching during this period relied on a one-way transmission of information. The modes of instructional interaction within traditional pedagogy were undergirded by a philosophy of education based on a narrow conception of social reproduction. Information deemed worthy of knowing that would reproduce society in the next generation was delivered to the students in a process of transmission. The teaching methods associated with this pedagogical approach emphasized linear models,

information density, comprehensive testing, and recall.[2] As in Classical times, the dominant philosophy of education indicated the methods used in each period to obtain the desired outcome. Additionally, these perspectives also determined where knowledge comes from and the appropriate uses for it. For instance, the traditional model placed all knowledge in the teacher whose job then became to dispense it at regularly spaced intervals to the students who would then be able to internalize it and repeat it back proving that they now "know it" also.

In the 20th century, progressive educators reacted against this traditional model to propose a more active and creative approach to teaching that took into account the interests of the child in a more student-centered, self-directed approach to learning. However, Dewey (1938) cautioned against reacting to the traditional model in such a way as to go to the opposite extreme without first answering the hard question of what education is *for*. Dewey's position, first described in *Democracy and Education* (1916) and elaborated in *Experience and Education* (1938) laid out his philosophy that the source of all education is experience and the purpose of pedagogy (teaching) is to construct experiences that are educative and promote growth, and that are fundamentally connected to each other in order to build up the knowledge base of the student, as well as how to productively use that knowledge in society. Germane to this project, for Dewey, educative experiences are inherently social. This underlying philosophy of education hearkened back to the classical liberal arts approach that included preparing the student for an active civic life. In many ways, Dewey's philosophical approach is alive and well in

[2] It is worth noting that this model is still prevalent in contemporary U.S. education, most notably in the sciences as well as K-12 education since the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

contemporary conceptions and applications of pedagogy for socially transformative purposes, but it exists alongside and in response to traditional models that still hold sway.

Changes in pedagogy post-1950 have had the most impact on the current landscape of educational research as a result of tremendous social upheaval across the globe. Struggles for freedom and independence in colonial nations and around the world gave rise to new strands of theoretical discourse that were critical of traditional models of education and pedagogy (Freire, 1970). Postman and Weingartner (1969), writing in the context of U.S. primary and secondary education, argued strenuously for teaching to become a "subversive" activity whose goals included subverting the passive acceptance of the status quo and teaching critical thinking in the service of what they euphemistically call "crap detection" (p. 2). As they explained it,

> One of the tenets of a democratic society is that men [sic] be allowed to think and express themselves freely on any subject, even to the point of speaking out against the idea of a democratic society. To the extent that our schools are instruments of such a society, they must develop in the young not only an awareness of this freedom but a will to exercise it, and the intellectual power and perspective to do so effectively. This is necessary so that the society may continue to change and modify itself to meet unforeseen threats, problems, and opportunities. (Postman and Weingartner, 1969, p. 1)

This approach encapsulates the strains of argument advanced for rejecting traditional models of pedagogy for social reproduction based on the knowledge that training students for the society that their parents inhabited would not serve them well in a vastly different social, political environment. Here the emphasis on pedagogy shifted again, away from information reception and regurgitation to preparing students for critical thinking and social action.

Following the developments in postcolonial regions around the world, and as a result of the Civil Rights and feminist movements in the U.S., various strands of radical pedagogy arose to address both the macro-level structure of education as well as the micro-practices involved in teaching and learning (Gore, 1993). Radical approaches, so called because of their intent to engage social and political reform across the structure of education within a society, addressed multiple facets of student identity such that critical pedagogies were developed to address class and power differences, feminist pedagogies were developed to counter the effects of sexism and patriarchy, antiracist pedagogies were developed to help students un-learn racism, and so on. It is worth noting that each strand of pedagogy is grounded in a different sociopolitical approach resulting in a proliferation of terms used to describe these different pedagogies. For example, Gore (1993) explained that, "we find 'progressive pedagogy,' 'radical pedagogy,' 'critical pedagogy,' 'feminist pedagogy,' 'socialist pedagogy' and others," and that, "these approaches have roots in particular political and theoretical movements and are variously constructed as oppositional to 'mainstream' or 'traditional' schooling practices and theories" (p. 3). For each term, there is an associated set of beliefs about the purpose and practice of education that should not be used interchangeably (but frequently are), and mean different things to scholar/teachers in different fields. An overly simplistic categorization of these different pedagogies groups them loosely into themed camps on a continuum from traditional to radical where critical, feminist, and transformative approaches occupy one end. Thus, the conception of pedagogy, its purpose and processes, has evolved considerably, and continues to do so, across the

realm of critical approaches ushered in during the 1960s. The common thread is an ongoing push-pull about the nature and purpose of education as well as the most effective or desirable means for accomplishing (and teaching) it. This tension is ongoing and continual, which is what makes discussions of pedagogy relevant both practically and theoretically, especially in light of the current project, and in the ways that certain strands of the critical approach are relevant to the construction of pedagogy for social justice.

Critical Pedagogy and Communication Contexts

In the changing landscape of pedagogical approaches, addressing the question of what education is for, Freire (1970) famously identified the "banking model" of teaching where the teachers, as knowledge holders, deposit information into the minds of students for withdrawal at some later date. He noted that this teacher student relationship was narrative in character, where the teacher narrated subject matter to the listening students, but in this process the topics became static, motionless, and disconnected from reality. Loewen (2005) offered a compelling recent example of this kind of disconnection in his survey of American History textbooks that listed fact after fact about people, events, and time periods without providing the contextual background on the controversies that produced any of these moments in history. In his analysis, Loewen argued that the effect of teaching in this way is to disengage students from the complexity of lived experiences and present knowledge as a fait accompli. With no referent for understanding the ongoing struggles between different groups over power, inclusiveness, and access to

resources, it becomes easy for students to overlook the ways that our past informs our present. Hence the need for a pedagogy that connects content to the lives and experiences of students so that they may become more active agents in knowledge creation and understand the world as living, changing, and dynamic.

In response to the changing global conditions and problems of a banking pedagogy, Freire (1970) offered problem-posing education, a method of teaching that presents students with situations (problems) and asks them to think about how they could be addressed from the various perspectives of the participants involved. "Whereas the banking method directly or indirectly reinforces men's [sic] fatalistic perception of their situation, the problem-posing method presents this very situation to them as a problem" (p. 85). More to the point for this project, he characterized knowledge production as something that happens between people through the process of communication. "Problem-posing education affirms men and women as beings in the process of becoming—as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality… The unfinished character of human beings and the transformational character of reality necessitate that education be an ongoing activity" (Freire, 1970, p. 84). This stance indicates the nature of human social reality as something that is constructed together, with each other, as part of being human. Because human beings are incomplete creatures, we are constantly in the process of creating and re-creating our social worlds through discourse.

> A deepened consciousness of their situation leads people to apprehend that situation as an historical reality susceptible to transformation…The pursuit of full humanity, however, cannot be carried out in isolation or individualism, but only in fellowship and solidarity; therefore it cannot unfold in the antagonistic relations between oppressors and oppressed. No one can be

> authentically human while he [sic] prevents others from being so. (Freire, 1970, p. 85)

The transformative nature of social reality, as changeable based on the choices we make and actions we take, is crucial to critical pedagogy because of its emphasis on liberation, transformation, and emancipation. If the world is malleable and there are no set realities other than those we create amongst ourselves, then there is no reason that things must stay as they are. Injustices do not exist because of essential characteristics of the oppressed but rather as a condition of the reality created by the oppressors. This realization sets the stage for a pedagogy of liberation that takes into account the changeable structure of social reality and the processes through which that change is manifest—communication.

As mentioned earlier, pedagogy has often been used in teacher education literature in the etymological sense, meaning the guidance of the child, but this is not the most useful definition of the term for understanding radical pedagogies, according to Gore (1993). Gore relies on Lusted (1986) to outline a definition of pedagogy that is particularly apt for the current study because of the emphasis on the *process* through which knowledge is produced and the *social vision* for which that knowledge is produced.

> Unlike "mainstream" pedagogical discourses, the critical and feminist work on pedagogy has addressed "macro" issues in schooling, such as the institutions and ideologies within which pedagogy is situated. Beginning from the premise that schooling is not neutral, critical and feminist approaches to pedagogy emphasize their own social vision(s) for education and schooling, in an attempt to connect the macro and micro. (Gore, 1993, p. 4)

Gore's research supports the use of the two pronged definition of pedagogy, as both instruction and social vision, to navigate the tensions within contemporary

educational systems for the practice of critical pedagogy, also described as "pedagogy of possibility" (Simon, 1992). The inclusion of a social vision is the impetus for the use of critical pedagogy as a particularly relevant theoretical framework for the current study of communication educators who claim a stance of working toward social justice through their teaching practice.

Another important component of Gore's (1993) study was her assessment of the techniques used for critical pedagogy and their similarity to the strategies heralded by progressive educators prior to the emergence of the critical perspective. The use of different seating arrangements, student choice and input to content and assignments, collaborative learning and working in small groups are all techniques advocated for use in other forms of pedagogy and repurposed in critical pedagogy for their ability to address power imbalances. However, it is important to note that no seating arrangement or set of assignments in and of itself *is* critical pedagogy or will result in emancipatory education, merely that these techniques can be combined with the theoretical approach to pedagogy and used by teachers to stimulate different kinds of learning in the classroom setting, namely learning associated with critical examinations of power structures and imbalances on the macro- and micro-level. More important for this study is the recognition that some of the basic techniques of engaging students in the classroom have not changed; rather, they have been used for a different *purpose.* In the case of critical educators working toward social justice, this purpose is expressly political.

Kincheloe (2005) explained that, "Any time teachers develop a pedagogy, they are concurrently constructing a political vision. The two acts are inseparable"

(p. 9). As my own experience can attest, the choices that teachers make when constructing their pedagogy are choices between and among different political viewpoints such that there is no neutral space. In much the same way as one cannot *not* communicate, teachers cannot *not* adhere to a political vision in their classrooms, regardless of whether or not they consciously claim a political position. In this project I am examining the practices of teachers who have acknowledged this position, are transparent about it, and are actively working to make their classrooms align with a political vision of social justice. Furthermore, Kincheloe (2005) updated the concepts of critical pedagogy to respond to contemporary trends in U.S. education explaining the central characteristics of critical pedagogy as they are understood currently. First and foremost, he argued that critical pedagogy is grounded on a vision of justice and equality with the belief that education is inherently political. As such, critical pedagogy requires that teachers be researchers of their students and understand them as socially constructed to better teach them, prevent them from being hurt, and work to alleviate human suffering. To do these things, critical pedagogy is also grounded in a critique of positivism and is skeptical of science to regulate what counts as knowledge. Finally, critical pedagogy is contextually grounded and concerns itself with marginalized nondominant groups to identify generative themes, teach students to be rigorous critical thinkers, and work for social change (Kincheloe, 2005). Which leads to a discussion of the current project, where I examine the pedagogical practices of instructors who have committed to teaching for social justice. In the balance of this chapter, I provide a theoretical basis for examining the pedagogy of these instructors from the

perspectives of social constructionism and critical pedagogy. Combined, these perspectives offer a framework for understanding how critical educators undertake the construction of pedagogy for the specific goal of social justice.

Education for a Purpose and the Purpose of Education

The initial question these theoretical perspectives address is the purpose of schooling in the modern climate. A social justice approach to education is predicated on a political vision of transformation toward a more just and equitable society. In this frame the function of education moves from maintenance of the status quo to critical reflection and evaluation of dominant norms to identify alternatives to oppressive structures. Both critical pedagogy and social constructionism embrace liberatory ends while recognizing that change is measured in the incorporation of the *process* over a utopian end *product*.

> Pedagogy always represents a commitment to the future, and it remains the task of educators to make sure that the future points the way to a more socially just world, a world in which the discourses of critique and possibility in conjunction with the values of reason, freedom, and equality function to alter, as part of a broader democratic project, the grounds upon which life is lived. (Giroux, 2007, p. 2)

Thus, critical pedagogy is grounded firmly in a democratic approach to education that values engaged citizenship (Giroux, 1988) as the path to permanent liberation. As Freire (1970) originally conceptualized it, a critical pedagogy of the oppressed is ongoing and will ultimately serve the ends of liberating both the oppressor and the oppressed.

> The pedagogy of the oppressed, as a humanist and libertarian pedagogy, has two distinct stages. In the first, the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation. In the

> second stage, in which the reality of oppression has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation (Freire, 1970, p. 54).

Sprague (1992) summarized this tradition describing schools as becoming models of democratic citizenship where debate, discussion, and consensus building are recovered with classrooms as public spheres, where we can "institutionalize reflective practice," and begin to "talk seriously about collective goals and to learn the skills of inquiry, advocacy, and consensus" (p. 7). Beginning, as McLaren (2003) did, with the "premise that *men and women are essentially unfree and inhabit a world rife with contradictions and asymmetries of power and privilege*" the critical educator endorses a dialectical approach to analysis, one that allows us to "focus *simultaneously on both sides of a social contradiction*" (p. 69-70), the ultimate goal of which helps to contextualize the problems of society as deficiencies in the social structure in need of remedying. In this transformative space multiple social issues can be addressed, as Shor (1992) explained in his experiences teaching working-class students and as hooks (1994) elaborated when discussing race, class, gender, and sexuality.

The theoretical project of critical pedagogy imagines and works toward a classroom space where diverse students engage in the principles of critical reflection and where the curriculum is connected to their lives in meaningful ways. This pedagogy values the embodied subject position of the students as places from which they contribute knowledge of the world and its impact on their everyday lived realities. Through open dialogue and communication, teachers and students explore generative themes, unearthing the roots of damaging stereotypical

conceptions of nondominant populations and engage in the language of possibility for what could be, what will be, as a result of their co-constructed knowledge. The relationships and interaction that occurs in the classroom creates a space where participants can learn to exercise their own agency.

> Critical pedagogy is not simply concerned with offering students new ways to think critically and act with authority as agents in the classroom; it is also concerned with providing students with the skills and knowledge necessary for them to expand their capacities both to question deep-seated assumptions and myths that legitimate the most archaic and disempowering social practices that structure every aspect of society and to take responsibility for intervening in the world they inhabit. (Giroux, 2007, p. 2)

Social constructionism and critical pedagogy share several goals in this respect. The social constructionist emphasis on understanding the world as created, and thus subject to revision, is a key component in communication instruction. Sprague (1992) situated this notion squarely within the tradition of the discipline and argued for a critical approach to pedagogy and research asserting that, "if schools as they are constituted serve some interests at the expense of others, then we must question how our research and teaching functions either to perpetuate or change current social arrangements" (p. 7). Also within the social constructionist frame is the notion that while communication functions to transmit new information, its primary role is in providing continuity and predictability to the social system (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1989). As the process by which the social order is circulated and maintained, communication deserves analysis for the ways that it functions to reproduce existing social arrangements and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1973) and its role in disseminating the hidden curriculum, the lesson plan that no one teaches but everyone learns (Gerbner, 1974). Inherent in a social

understanding of meaning creation is also recognition of the arbitrary nature of behavior. While it is difficult to see behavior as arbitrary due to its patterned nature, it is crucial to do so when teaching students to see the world as socially constructed. Behavior that results in power differences, oppressive regimes, and devaluing of others is not a necessary precondition for society but exists as a result of arbitrary determinations about the meaning of different categories of persons. Communication education that addresses these issues shares the emancipatory and transformational goals of critical pedagogy to aid students in understanding the nature of their realities as open for negotiation and change.

The purpose of education from both a social constructionist and a critical pedagogical perspective is transformation. Critical pedagogy incorporates a cynical view of institutions as oppressive structures and works to make the power imbalances visible and challenge the traditional view of schooling as reproducing social classes (Bowles and Gintis, 1976) so that the oppressed develop a critical consciousness and are prepared for democratic participation. Social constructionism emphasizes the systematic, rule governed, patterned, yet arbitrary nature of communication to highlight how social relationships are created and re-created through interaction with the goal of stimulating students to critique particular constructions that oppress and marginalize while also being critically reflexive of language use and using their new knowledge to work for social change. Combined, the two perspectives illuminate the purpose of education, which is to continually point out the constructed nature of social arrangements so they can be evaluated and updated when need be to create better social worlds. The process of

pointing out how our social worlds are created and maintained begins with knowledge production and is the subject of the following section.

What Knowledge, For Whom

As mentioned previously, critical pedagogy is inherently skeptical of the force of scientific ways of knowing as the standard for knowledge production. With an emphasis on marginalized and nondominant populations, critical pedagogy takes into account situated, contextual knowledge developed in and through experience. Kincheloe (2005) explained that, "proponents of critical pedagogy understand that every dimension of schooling and every form of educational practice are politically contested spaces" (p. 2). This includes the content of the curriculum and the various modes of production for producing curricular knowledge. He acknowledged that the creation of pedagogy is always and already an inherently political act such that,

> Teaching a critical pedagogy involves more than learning a few pedagogical techniques and the knowledge required by the curriculum, the standards, or the textbook. Critical teachers must understand not only a wide body of subject matter but also the political structure of the school. They must also possess a wide range of education in culture: TV, radio, popular music, movies, the Internet, youth subcultures, and so on; alternative bodies of knowledge produced by marginalized or low-status groups; the ways power operates to construct identities and oppress particular groups; the modus operandi (MO) of the ways social regulation operates; the complex processes of racism, gender bias, class bias, cultural bias, heterosexism, religious intolerance, and so on; the cultural experiences of students; diverse teaching styles; the forces that shape the curriculum; the often-conflicting purposes of education; and much more. (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 3)

In other words, critical teachers need to be invested in their students, aware of them as the products of a socially constructed culture, and in tune with the myriad aspects of that culture in order to address critical social issues in the curriculum and

lives of the students. Overall, the process of knowledge production within critical pedagogy is contextual, grounded in an understanding of larger social structures that impact the school and the lives of the students as well as the relationships between students and teachers, students and students, students and society.

Of particular importance to the critical pedagogy project also is helping teachers to understand the political and ideological underpinnings of traditional knowledge so that taken for granted models can be challenged in a diverse classroom. Indeed, hooks (1994) devoted considerable time trying to educate professors at her institution who resisted seeing the traditional cannon as inherently ideological and professed a neutral stance in the classroom.

> Again and again, it was necessary to remind everyone that no education is politically neutral. Emphasizing that a white male professor in an English department who teaches only works by "great white men" is making a political decision, we had to work consistently against and through the overwhelming will on the part of folks to deny the politics of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and so forth that inform how and what we teach. (hooks, 1994, p. 37)

Thus, critical educators problematize canonical knowledge as part of their pedagogy by asking who it benefits, under what conditions it was created, and whose voices are not present, for the express purpose of exposing the political aspects of education and making the curriculum more transparent for students. In this way, critical pedagogy challenges the hegemony of Western modes of being by denying them as the only authentic truths of human experience and linking course content to the everyday material realities of the students.

Similarly, social constructionism takes a critical stance toward taken for granted knowledge that includes being critical of our own observations of the world

and how we know what we know. Burr (2003) offered the example of sex and gender to explain how we should be critical of the information presented as knowledge given that sex refers to biological characteristics and gender refers to social characteristics. She explained, "social constructionism bids us to seriously question whether the categories 'man' and 'woman' are simply a reflection of naturally occurring distinct types of human being" (p. 3). In addition to this kind of evaluation, social constructionists also recognize that how we understand the world is always historically and culturally specific and provides a caution against thinking of our ways as any better (or worse) than the ways of others.

Subsequently, what we take as knowledge is not a reflection of the world as it is, but rather is something that is created between people and most often through language. Further, knowledge and social action go together as a result of certain knowledge taking precedence over other forms, which then invites a particular form of response. Meaning that once certain constructions are adopted, they require specific responses as a result. For example, now that we have constructed categories for types of students (e.g., learning disabled), then we are invited to respond in particular ways (e.g., offering diagnostic tests, tutoring, alternative curriculum, etc.). "'Facts' are not neutral and out there waiting to be discovered, so as to guarantee one overarching account of 'this is the way things are'. Instead, such 'facts' are constructed in fields of activities, and worked up into ideologies that benefit some people while disempowering others" (Lock & Strong, 2010, p. 2).

From the perspective of social constructionism, learning is the process of internalizing the various patterns for knowledge production so that the initiate is

able to behave in ways consistent with the larger culture. According to Shotter (1993),

> Incorporated in all of what is accounted as human knowledge, is an evaluative or corrigible aspect. Thus, in acquiring any "information" about one's circumstances, one must know what one encounters *should* be accounted—for not *everything* one encounters in one's surroundings can be accounted as information by any means. Hence, among many other things, what is involved in gaining one's autonomy and learning how to learn by acquiring "information," is grasping the "methods" of checking applied by others to what are counted as claims to knowledge, and applying them in one's own attempt to learn. (p. 101)

Thus, a social constructionist perspective refutes transmission models of education that rely on transfer of supposedly objective content from teachers to students, but relies instead on a constructive model that requires interaction between material and methods of analysis so that new information is viewed as resources from which to create further constructions.

Knowledge, in both perspectives, loses its veneer of neutrality, as objective facts discovered outside of human existence applied to control behavior, and becomes mutable, contestable, and open to interpretation based on the critical perspectives of those formerly silenced by the traditional doxa. Within social constructionism, knowledge is produced through interaction where the primary focus is on the use of language, symbols, and rituals (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1989). While in critical pedagogy, knowledge is produced through interaction and dialogue between teacher-students and student-teachers (Freire, 1970). Both perspectives rely on communal engagement between participants as the foundation for applying a critical perspective toward experience in the joint creation of knowledge. This

relationship demands mutual respect and a degree of trust, thus power plays an important role in pedagogies designed for social justice.

What Happens with Power?

Foucault (1994) expressed the relationship between power and knowledge elegantly as an intertwined couplet. In his view, power must be examined as a productive social network that permeates the entire social body. This also leads to his description of power-knowledge or knowledge-power. Here, he is looking at the junction between modes of power exercised and modes of knowledge acquisition and transmission. The two are joined at this juncture, neither entirely separate from the other; knowledge is a function of power and power is a function of knowledge. As he pointed out, "curiously, the economic structures of our society are better known, more thoroughly inventoried, more clearly defined than the structures of political power" (p. 17). Therefore, Foucault (1994) advocated looking at power as a circulating process rather than a set of structures that one either has or has not. His most succinct definition of power is "a set of actions upon other actions" (p. 341). He also cautioned that power, and the exercise thereof, is not always negative, that it could not possibly be, otherwise people would not be brought to obey it. The beauty of the idea that power circulates is that it "doesn't always weigh on us a force that says no; it also traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse" (p. 120).

Critical pedagogy is concerned with power on several fronts. The oppressor/oppressed relationship rests on an unequal distribution of power, thus

critical examinations of power both in society and in the classroom are at the heart of any critical pedagogy. One of the most common manifestations of these critiques refers to teacher power and authority in the classroom and how to reduce the distance between teacher (as all-knowing), and students (as partners in knowledge production). The tension between adopting a critical pedagogy and implementing it successfully in the classroom demands acknowledgement of the power differential as well as understanding that this relationship may always be unbalanced. Ellsworth (1989) vividly described her experience attempting to enact a critical pedagogy and found herself limited by her subject position as a White, middle-class female teacher with a student population that did not resemble her. Her experience serves as a reminder that critical pedagogical methods alone are *not* a critical pedagogy, that they may not be implemented without a certain amount of tension and/or resistance, and that they require continual evaluation and revision.

Since none of the techniques in and of themselves make a critical pedagogy, the practice of implementing them is also a process and one that Giroux (2004) claimed educators cannot ignore. "The responsibility of critical educators cannot be separated from the consequences of the subject positions they have been assigned, the knowledge they produce, the social relations they legitimate, and the ideologies they disseminate to students" (p. 41). He continued by explaining that, "teaching in this sense becomes performative and contextual, it highlights considerations of power, politics, and ethics fundamental to any form of teacher-student-text interaction" (p. 41). His argument echoes others within the discourse who understand teaching as inherently political (hooks, 1994; Kincheloe, 2005) and the

teacher's identity as politicized, such that rather than try to eliminate power differences or diminish differences that cannot really be removed from the context, that we instead use our subject position productively.

Democratization is Giroux's (2004) term for the process of educating toward democracy[3] because it implies the always, unfinished nature of a democratic social order. He explained further that,

> Any critical notion of authority demands consideration by both teachers and students of how it is used and functions within specific relations of power. Authority that is directive but open, critical but not closed, must be vigilant and self-conscious about its promise to provide students with a public space where they can learn, debate, and engage critical traditions in order to expand their own sense of individual agency while simultaneously developing those discourses that are crucial for defending vital social institutions as a public good… At its best, critical pedagogy must be interdisciplinary and radically contextual, and it must engage the complex relationships between power and knowledge, critically address the institutional constraints under which teaching takes place, and focus on how students can engage the imperatives of critical social citizenship. (Giroux, 2004, p. 43)

Thus, teacher power can be mediated but not eliminated and may be used to bring resources to bear on classroom interactions giving students access to a broader range of materials out of which to co-construct knowledge.

Critical pedagogy is also concerned with the ideological dimensions of power and as such calls attention to larger structures within the school and society to illuminate how power circulates beyond specific classrooms. Mumby (1994) explained the relationship between ideology and power and how it is constituted through communication. He made the point that the locus of study connecting

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[3] It is worth noting that democracy is a problematic concept in some approaches to critical pedagogy, identified most by feminist and postcolonial theorists (e.g., Grande, 2004) who question the practice of democracy as one that can lead to social equality.

power and communication is ideology and that to study power, one must study ideology. He argued that to study ideology, one must study discourses for it is through language that ideology is constructed and re-constructed within culture.

> To study the relationship between discourse, ideology, and power is to examine the ways in which meaning serves to produce, reproduce and resist relations of domination. To adopt this perspective, one has to recognize that, (a) discourse is the principal medium through which relations of domination are both constituted and represented, and (b) that ideology functions in a mediatory capacity to connect discourse and relations of domination. (Mumby, 1994, p. 301, quoting Giddens, 1979; Thompson, 1984)

The emphasis on language and discourse makes ideology a topic of interest to social constructionists as well linking the goals of both critical pedagogy and social constructionism in their exploration of how power is structured throughout both Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) such as the police, the army, the prison system, and Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) like schools, churches, mass media and other institutions in society (Althusser, 1984).

Schools provide the primary institution of socialization and enculturation for a society and thus focusing on them as an ISA is important to educators working toward social justice. As hooks (1994) explained, "students from marginalized groups enter classrooms within institutions where their voices have been neither heard nor welcomed" and one of the primary goals of a critical approach to education is to increase the access of marginalized student voices in the classroom (p. 83-84). A social constructionist approach to education "suggests that we can create a more life-affirming reality by attending to our communicative behavior and choosing communicative acts that are more likely to improve than worsen our life situations" (Galanes, 2009, p. 135). Since communication is the process whereby

our social worlds are constructed, we must attend to the ways that we use communication when constructing classroom spaces, and especially those that adhere to a political vision of social justice. Galanes (2009) surveyed communication departments, courses, and assignments to assess the ways that this process occurs in higher education at various institutions across the country. She found that a majority of programs in her sample were grounded on social constructionist principles, whether or not they were explicitly stated in mission statements, course descriptions, or syllabi, and that in some places these tenets were expressed as commitments that they expected students to support. For example, the University of Memphis specifically "calls on the faculty and students to join in a 'sincere effort to understand and promote communication for the common good'" (p. 138). Hence, Galanes (2009) stated that, "Endorsement of social justice and communication that promotes the common good are rooted solidly in social construction principles" (p. 138).

Because social constructionism seeks to understand how social realities are constructed, and because it also recognizes that power is inherently included in whose version of reality is recognized, it is a likely candidate for studying communication for social justice. Much of the research conducted from a social justice perspective includes an examination of the power structures operating to privilege some and marginalize others. Social constructionism understands the importance of studying power and includes the goal of re-making social systems in the interest of promoting that which "makes us human and to transform the practices that impede the full expression of everyone's humanity" (Spano, Foss, &

Kirschbaum, 2009, p. 19). As Shotter (1993) explained, "in the social constructionist approach… new ways of talking do not always merely re-describe what already exists. In revealing new possibilities for human beings and in instituting new forms of human relationship, they can involve genuine political struggles to do with bringing new forms of social life into existence" (p. 38). This project is specifically concerned with how communication educators are using language and discourse in their pedagogy to bring new forms of social life into existence. Because power and ideology are imbricated, the examination of one requires the examination of the other and this study is focused on understanding how educators are engaging the ideological components of communication content in their pedagogy as part of their process to bring forth better social worlds. With the goal of studying the language and power nexus in classrooms devoted to a social justice pedagogy, an additional component of study becomes the identity of the participants.

Identity, Social Constructions, and Critical Pedagogy

Conversations about the nature of identity and the source of meaning creation have been integral to the different strands of the communication discipline since its inception and continue to stimulate debate across areas and between paradigmatic orientations. Social constructionists view reality as created in the interactions between members through language, ritual, and symbols (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1989). This perspective also accounts for the identity of social actors as a social construction rather than an individualistic one. However, individualism, as a mode of considering the human condition, has been the norm in modernity since the

rise of a liberal-capitalist society, according to Habermas (1975). Lannamann (1995) explained that a significant portion of communication research still relies on individualistic interpretations, where meaning comes from individuals, is inserted into words, and transferred to others therefore, the "logical grammar of the conduit metaphor requires that personal attributes be located *in* individuals" (p. 116). Indeed, Lannamann (1995) further noted that this focus on individualism prevents interpersonal communication research from entering the social field because it does not include an emphasis on the interaction between members as a way of understanding meaning construction such that, "to the extent that interpersonal communication research mimics the ideological story lines that constitute our cultural narratives, the field disqualifies itself from entering into a dialogue about social change" (p. 121). Thus, social constructionists reject identity as an individual construction and focus on it as a *social* construction. Indeed, for those constructionists interested in pursuing social change, research that does not emphasize a social origin for meaning is limited in the claims it can make toward changing larger social structures.

Among the research contributions in this area, Leeds-Hurwitz (2009) highlighted identity as one of the major categories citing studies that have explored the nature of gender, class, race, religion, or some combination of these, as social constructions. These studies have shown identity to be something that we *do* rather than something that we *are,* a perspective that echoes Goffman's (1959) discussion of the presentation of self in everyday life. Accordingly, Johnson (1997) stated that, "Identity is contingent upon social interaction (language and communication)

because who we are is constructed through the use of language. Without language, there would be no social world or 'sense of self'" (p. 57). Therefore, an emphasis on language and communication, especially in educational settings, provides an important method for creating critical spaces where language (pejorative, injurious, or otherwise) can be studied. Indeed, the process of *naming*, something Freire (1970) claimed is the process that makes us human, is even more important for nondominant social groups who have not been able to choose their terms or decide how they want to self-identify with regard to their raced, classed, or gendered social positions. The ability to construct an identity as feminist, queer, Chicana, ally, or any number of others, is crucial to establishing a sense of group identity that provides a foundation for dealing with oppressive conditions. Therefore, an emphasis on language as the tool for constructing social identities is important to any pedagogy aimed at transformation of oppressive structures.

Gergen (1997) further explained that constructionists oppose the conception of an independent, self-contained mind but rather view persons as constituted within relationships and that the process of relationship "furnished the basis for all meaning" and "becomes the font of all that we hold dear, all human value" (paragraph, 4). Thus, the relationship is the social unit that provides meaning and structure to interaction, which means research should focus on the relationship as a way to create healthy identities in opposition to stereotyped views of people from nondominant groups. Gergen (1997) added that in ideal educational contexts, traditional bodies of disciplinary knowledge are challenged, reflexive consideration of multiple standpoints is emphasized, and greater respect is given to the

"interpretive communities" the students come from and to which they will return. As an ideal, this perspective indicates what a social constructionist perspective has to offer even if it has yet to be achieved. There is less emphasis on mastering content than in fostering collaboration across diverse communities, which leads also to a communal view of evaluation whereby students are judged on the function of knowledge in multiple contexts rather than against a single objective standard. According to Galanes (2009),

> The [social construction] perspective seems particularly prevalent in courses that focus on identity creation, maintenance and change, including courses in race, ethnicity, sex and gender, age, and class; courses that focus on interactions between and among different groups, such as intercultural, interracial, and interethnic communication; and courses that emphasize the role of mass media in society when that role is conceived as engaging in interplay between what audience members bring to the media and what the media themselves offer. (p. 146)

In an educational setting, constructionist perspectives help participants construct a context for interaction that creates the group or society in which that interaction takes place. This also incorporates a focus on understanding the differences in background and cultural codes that participants bring with them because meaning creation is contingent upon a shared background of some sort. As Leeds-Hurwitz (1989) eloquently stated, "we must be willing to discover the meanings other people have for their behavior, rather than imposing upon them the meanings their behavior has for us" (p. 83-84). Because we learn to communicate in our own structured, rule-governed social groups, we must be able to identify when we are trying to apply our own rules to the behavior of others, especially when the application of those rules puts others in a disadvantaged position. This treatment of identity, as social rather than individual, offers an important component of the

constructionist view as the explanation for how the process of meaning construction works through language and social interaction.

Social constructionist commitments to identity construction through language and interaction have also come to undergird research on identity in other areas so much so that some researchers have neglected to mention the concept at all, rather taking it as a given (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009). This kind of acceptance of the social nature of knowledge construction can be seen in research that is not explicitly labeled communication but that focuses on knowledge production through communication. Hardiman and Jackson (1997) posited social identity development theory to describe aspects of identity development that are common for members of dominant and nondominant groups, labeled agent and target. Their model serves as a conceptual foundation for various social justice courses and includes stages from naïve social consciousness to passive or active acceptance, passive or active resistance, redefinition, and internalization. In each of these stages the behaviors that are adopted or performed are conveyed socially within familial or other interpersonal contexts. For example,

> The events that transform children from a naïve or unsocialized state to a stage of Acceptance of their social dominance or subordination are numerous. The most significant socializers appear to be parents, who are role models of attitudes and behaviors, and who convey important messages through their words and silences, actions and inactions; the formal education system including teachers, and the formal and informal curriculum; peers who set the standards for appropriate and inappropriate behavior; religious organizations; the mass media; and the larger community with its norms, laws, social structures, and cultures that set the limits, formal and informal, for the behavior of citizens. (Hardiman and Jackson, 1997, p. 23-24)

In other words, these stages of identity are inherently socially constructed as a result of interactions between members in contexts through language. However,

Hardiman and Jackson caution against using this model to simplistically label people but rather to try to identify where students might be in the spectrum of social identity positions about issues of dominance and subordination so that curriculum can be planned to address different positions.

Critical pedagogy addresses identity similarly in that Freire's (1970) dialogic approach to interaction depends upon the acknowledgement of different social positions (he uses oppressor/oppressed) before authentic dialogue can take place. According to Fischman and Haas (2009), "one of the strongest claims of most practitioners and supporters of critical pedagogy is that the concrete results of schooling are constructed in and through people's linguistic, cultural, social, and pedagogical specific interactions which both shape and are shaped by social, political, economic, and cultural dynamics" (p. 569). This perspective corresponds with social constructionism as the means through which identities are constructed and enacted in classroom spaces. It also provides a framework for discussing different social identity positions as a component of pedagogical practice. Addressing her own experiences with social class in higher education, hooks (1994) explained that she was compelled to use her voice to disrupt conversations that took the experiences of White, materially privileged women as the norm. She added that critical and feminist pedagogies emphasize the issue of coming to voice because "race, sex, and class privilege empower some students more than others, granting 'authority' to some voices more than others" (p. 185). Thus, the careful analysis of language and the identity positions of students and teachers in classrooms dedicated to social justice are a pivotal component of the pedagogy itself.

Strategies and techniques that emphasize voice and the voicing of experiences in relation to dominating structures are among the goals of empowering education for nondominant students. Treice, Hill, Clark, Lin, and Spiker (2002) advocated a materialist critical perspective to examine institutions and structures that produce unequal relations in society and "in addition to a critique, a materialist critical pedagogy challenges mainstream integration through a language of possibility, the envisioning and articulation of new and more just ways of being, living, and working" (p. 59). These authors asserted that, as communication scholars and teachers, we have a responsibility to,

> Begin the process of (re)naming based on the perspectives and experiences of people of color who have historically been left out of this process both in the classroom and in the broader community. Imagining anew, though, must be articulated in terms of a collective identity that recognizes differences—different voices, backgrounds, perspectives, needs—while not abandoning the imperative to speak collectively, as a unified voice, and to recognize common needs and concerns. (p. 59)

As Fassett and Warren (2007) described in their adaptation of critical pedagogy for communication classrooms, identities are constituted in communication and mundane communication practices are constitutive of larger social structural systems. Therefore, the analysis of language is central and reflexivity is an essential condition for social, structural critique. Furthermore, Fischman and Haas (2009) explained that, "each of us, as members of multiple and specific social groups, recognizes, perceives, believes, and acts upon complex and contradictory realities" (p. 570). In critical pedagogy, the engagement of these diverse and sometimes contradictory realities is one of the cornerstones of the liberatory project. Torres (2007) linked contemporary applications of critical

pedagogy to the foundational work done by Freire to assert that, since language constructs identities, language needs to be carefully inspected. Language constructs the key structures that define human interests and "social justice learning entails an examination of systems, organizational processes, institutional dynamics, rules, mores, and regulations, including prevailing traditions and customs" (Torres, 2007, p. 244). Because these structures both enable and constrain human agency, they deserve exploration to unveil the conditions of "alienation and exploitation in society" to promote transformative social justice learning, a "model that calls on people to develop a process of social and individual awareness" (Torres, 2007, p. 244).

For Freire (1970), the process of individual awareness and critical reflection is encapsulated in the term *conscientização* (translated as conscientization), or a form of critical consciousness. This deepening awareness is required for people to begin thinking critically about the circumstances of their reality, thus *conscientização* requires, "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 1970/2002, p. 35). As an outcome for critical pedagogy in contemporary contexts, *conscientização* is a process of "social introspection and self-reflectivity" that invites researchers, practitioners, and activists to "develop a permanent ethical attitude of epistemological and ethical self-vigilance" in order to be "agents of social transformation facing potentially transformable structures" (Torres, 2007, p. 245). Therefore, according to the critical model for liberatory pedagogy, teachers and students should practice a co-intentional education, one where both are "Subjects,

not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge" (Freire, 1970/2002, p. 69). This perspective describes a humanizing pedagogy, one concerned with participants becoming more fully human through their examination of identity and social location in relation to structures of oppression and domination. A pedagogy that emphasizes what it means to be human and critically evaluates the curriculum and institutions that prevent full and active participation by all members in a society could be called a social justice pedagogy and is the subject of the current study. The theoretical frameworks offered by these perspectives provide anchoring with which to explore what it means to call communication pedagogy oriented toward social justice.

Conclusion

As this review demonstrates, the theoretical perspectives of critical pedagogy and social constructionism are both concerned with transforming social structures to benefit the common good, making them a solid foundation on which to explore communication pedagogy for social justice. Each perspective includes an emphasis on language as the means by which knowledge and social order is created while also understanding that the critique of language is a necessary component of transformation, and that language is also the medium through which change can be affected and new structures created. They both also share an emphasis on knowledge construction as related to experiences in the social world rather than objective realities discovered outside of the self. In addition, both take a critical

perspective on power and address it as a circulating force that can work to oppress or resist as part of institutional structures and intergroup relationships within a culture. These approaches understand identity in relation to others as created through interaction in relationships taking special interest in the multiple identity positions that individuals inhabit while also acknowledging the communal components of group identity. Both are concerned with the process of education to engender a critical consciousness that enables students to understand the constructed nature of reality, identify the structures and systems that hold that reality in place, develop their own vocabulary to address these systems, and exercise their agency as transformative agents in a democratic society.

Social constructionism provides a useful theoretical lens for understanding why communication educators working for social justice make specific choices with regard to their classroom tactics. It also helps provide an explanation for what is happening in these classrooms as a result of how social constructionism works in groups. Finally, social constructionism is a useful theoretical framework for helping us to understand how classrooms are constructed as liberatory spaces. According to Thayer (1989), "becoming human is not a matter of learning to see things as they are. It is a matter of slowly and imperceptibly learning how to see things and value things and explain things as those things are seen and valued and explained by those who thus in-form us" (p. ix).

Critical pedagogy supplements this knowledge with an explicit focus on opening up the taken for granted social structures that hierarchically order groups based on social desirability and grant access to power and privilege. This approach

to pedagogy offers grounding for a pedagogy of social justice analyzed in this study because of its express interest in democratization and producing students prepared with the necessary skills for participation in a democratic social structure. The communication discipline has a long history of such preparation dating back to the mythical tale of Corax and Tysius in ancient Greece moving forward to contemporary perspectives on the goal of a communication education (Sprague, 1990), and into the present examination of communication pedagogy for the express political purpose of social justice. Having established the theoretical foundations for this project, the next chapter examines the methods used to collect data and the processes used to analyze it.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

As described in Chapter 2, the conversation about communication pedagogy is ongoing and grounded in the roots of communication education, the portion of the field dedicated to understanding how we teach the discipline. However, this conversation often occurs anecdotally rather than empirically, meaning that robust discussions about pedagogical practice may happen during conference sessions or colloquia but that few end up published to add to our scholarly literature on the subject. Still needed are more in-depth explorations of the pedagogical materials and manifestations of them in classes pitched for particular purposes, like social justice.

The methods for this project are guided by the following research questions:

- RQ1—How do social justice educators think and talk about their work?
- RQ2—How do these communication educators incorporate social justice pedagogy into their courses?

The goal of each is to develop an *understanding* of the perspectives of practitioners engaged in pedagogy for the purpose of social justice. Miles and Huberman (1994) explained that "qualitative data with their emphasis on people's 'lived experience'

are fundamentally well suited for locating the *meanings* people place on the events, processes, and structures of their lives…and for connecting those meanings to the *social world* around them" (p. 10). In addition, these scholars explain that of the main purposes of research: exploration, explanation, description, and prediction, qualitative methods are the best suited for discovery. A point that Marshall and Rossman (2011) supported, explaining that qualitative methods provide a means for exploratory research to develop "thick description" ala Geertz (1973, p. 5) about a new or emerging topic. By gathering qualitative data that must be analyzed by (and through) the researcher, my intent was to build coherent structures of meaning between the data, the participants, and the researcher.

Hence, I chose to examine critical pedagogy for social justice qualitatively through the examination of materials produced by specific practitioners, as well as through interviews conducted with them, for four main reasons. First, the larger field of communication lacks a sustained examination of pedagogy for how we teach our field (Book, 1989; Sprague, 1993), and has thus far offered a severely limited discussion of social justice and pedagogy (Pearce, 2006). Specifically, the matter and materials of pedagogy are seldom the focus of empirical research, and those that are reported are done in anecdotal ways through biography, memoirs, or examples of teaching activities. One notable exception is Thompson (2007) who examined the syllabus as a communication document and how teachers presented it to their students. However, the emphasis in his study was on how to make the information more accessible for students and avoid problems that teachers have when presenting their course material.

Second, the philosophy of the teacher is embedded in these materials and they are distributed to students as indicators of the material manifestations of the social justice approach that each teacher incorporates into her/his pedagogy. As such, they were useful for examining both the instructor's understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of social justice pedagogy as well as the ways those foundations are built into their academic practice. Document analysis paired with semi-structured in-depth interviews provided a means for gathering a well-rounded view of the components the participants reported using in their pedagogy. Third, critical pedagogy for the specific purpose of social justice has yet to be theorized in pedagogical literature. The specific concepts and definitions that guide the overarching project vary widely among published scholars in the communication field as well as between fields with similar interests such as education.

My final reason encapsulates the first three in that this research is timely. The theme of social justice in education is growing and gaining traction. The term social justice has already achieved "buzz word" status and is being cited across the breadth of the field of communication in various forms. The sociocultural moment that we are experiencing is ripe for further debate about justice and what it means in our social, political, and economic context. For example, Harvard University professor Michael J. Sandel teaches a course titled *Justice* that grapples with political philosophy and moral reasoning to question our obligations to others in a free, democratic society. The course has become one of the most popular and influential on campus and has prompted the university to make the weekly sessions publicly available through their website, emphasizing both the timeliness and importance of

the topic. Because the field of potential pedagogical approaches to social justice is newly developing, an inductive approach to identifying them through the analysis of qualitative data served as an effective means for outlining the approaches of specific practitioners.

Therefore, my methods focused on gathering qualitative data on the specific pedagogy of teaching for social justice in communication and the materials created for that purpose. Hence, I collected and analyzed documents (syllabi, assignment descriptions, grading rubrics, and guidelines) from multiple practitioners in different sections of the field that share an emphasis on social justice. In addition, I conducted multiple semi-structured interviews with each participant to gain insight into constructions of their pedagogical approach. The balance of this chapter includes my metatheoretical stance toward the research, a description of the participants as well as my positionality in relation to them, the data collected and the manner in which it was analyzed.

An Interpretivist Stance

This project was designed around the exploration of one overarching theme, the goal of which was to gain an understanding of how communication scholar/educators approach social justice pedagogy, how they attempt to implement it, and commonalities that exist between them. As discussed in Chapter 2, it is more appropriate to think in terms of pedagogies since there are many that respond to different situations and exigencies. One of these many different

pedagogies is the strand devoted to social justice pursuits and is the subject of this study.

Over time and with changing social, economic, and political conditions the emphasis on education shifts and the demands placed on educators change. Thus pedagogy, a mode of interaction based on the underlying goals of the education process, also changes. Currently, the shift in communication classrooms has been to respond to situations of *in*justice in the social world and how the study of communication can produce better social worlds. My interest in studying pedagogy for social justice in communication classrooms is to find out more about what these instructors are doing and how it indicates *social justice* from their perspective.

The methodological framework that guides this project is necessarily interpretive given the nature of the questions that I am asking and my desire to understand the development and implementation of a critical pedagogy of social justice in communication from the perspectives of practitioners engaged in the practice of doing it. Interpretive research rests on the belief that "reality," as such, does not become meaningful until it is interpreted through the lens of human understanding and experience. The knower and the known are not separate, and reality, as we know it, is a product of social interaction rather than objective and removed from social processes. More specifically, I subscribe to a constructivist[1] paradigm that "assumes the relativism of multiple social realities, recognizes the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and aims toward

[1] A note about terminology—Galanes and Leeds-Hurwitz (2009) reviewed the lineage of the terms: constructivism, social constructionism, symbolic interactionism, etc. and explained that they are related terms that many times mean the same thing.

interpretive understanding of the subjects' meanings" (Charmaz, 2003, p. 250). In this project, my goals were to explore how pedagogy for social justice is conceptualized from the viewpoint of the instructors who are implementing it. Thus, the interpretive approach and constructivist paradigm provided for rich, situated engagement with the participants and the materials of pedagogy.

Constructivist interpretive research relies most often on the collection and analysis of qualitative data about which researchers can make situated and contextually grounded analyses. This form of research also uses the researcher as the instrument for making sense of the data collected. As Denzin and Lincoln (2003) explained, "The constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent co-create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures" (p. 35). Using these guiding metatheoretical assumptions, it was possible to conduct qualitative research on the "world of lived experience, for that is where individual belief and action intersect with culture" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 12). Qualitative research locates the observer in the world, in this case the specific worlds of practitioners engaged in the creative process of developing pedagogies of social justice. As Denzin and Lincoln (2003) further explained,

> Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials—case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interview; artifacts; cultural texts and productions; observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts—that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individual's lives. Accordingly, qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand. It is understood, however, that each practice makes the world visible in a different way. Hence there is frequently a commitment to using more than one interpretive practice in any study. (p. 5)

Thus, the naturalistic mode of inquiry relies on gathering data to formulate a situated understanding of the phenomenon under study. In this project, my goals were to understand the approaches to critical pedagogy for social justice in communication from the perspective of the practitioner. Therefore, the most effective means for doing so was to engage them through the situated context from which they offer their pedagogy in the form of their documents as well as their self-identified positions. The remainder of this chapter describes the participants, my positionality as a researcher, the data collected as well as the procedures used for analysis.

Participants

The participant pool for this study were all tenured professors in the field of communication who have self-identified in one form or another, through public statements, conference presentations, research publications, or by association with one another as members of an organization or interest group, that they enact a social justice perspective toward pedagogy. Specifically, I identified 8 faculty members from the communication discipline specializing in different areas that have asserted a social justice perspective and presented themselves as scholars, activists, and mentors for new faculty and graduate students who are interested in incorporating social justice into their teaching, research, and service. It was important to me to select participants who self-identify as social justice scholars for this project because I wanted to learn from people who described themselves in these terms. There are many other scholars doing research in areas that could

easily fall under the auspices of social justice work, but that may not claim an expressly political position as social justice activists, scholars, or teachers. Thus, it was imperative that I identify participants who already claimed this position within the field.

As it happened, all of these faculty members are associate or full professors and several occupy administrative positions within their respective departments and universities. At the time research was conducted, 2 participants were associate deans, 2 were department chairs, and 1 was an interim department chair. While I did not set out to study only established (or tenured) scholars, the parameters for selecting participants (that they be self-identified social justice scholars) narrowed my scope of options to individuals who have had the time, resources, and institutional support to conduct their research, publish it, and establish their reputations within the scholarly community for this kind of work. As a result, this group of participants represents a purposive sample of instructors from the field. This sample is judgmental (Miles & Huberman, 1994), meaning that the researcher's judgment was used to determine which participants would be the most useful and/or representative for the purposes of the study. Because of the exploratory nature of the study, this sampling method was the most useful for producing data from which to understand the pedagogy of self-identified communication educators teaching for social justice.

Participants came from a range of institutions (small, medium, large; public, liberal arts, and research) as well as different regions across the continent (West, Midwest, South, and southern Canada). The student populations at these

institutions also provided a range based on racial group, socioeconomic status, and geographical region. These demographics were also distinct from the participants who identify with a range of gender, race, and sexual identity positions. There were 4 women and 4 men, 2 women self-identify as Black, 2 as White; of the men, 2 self-identify as Black, 2 as White. One of the Black males and 1 of the White females self-identify as gay (with their students and in their writing), while 1 of the White females self-identifies as transgendered. The remaining males (1 Black and 2 White), as well as the remaining females (both Black), self-identify as heterosexual (with their students and in their writing). All participants are solidly middle-class as a result of their positions within academia, but came from different socioeconomic levels prior to their current location.

All of these scholars state that they teach their respective communication classes with a social justice perspective, and some of them are able to teach courses that are explicitly labeled social justice and communication, or service learning for social justice. As self-proclaimed scholars with a social justice orientation towards teaching and research, these individuals seemed well suited to the goals of this project. I was able to identify these scholars from my own participation in academic events throughout my graduate school experience. Because of my interests in teaching from a social justice perspective, I was drawn to conference presentations that addressed social justice and pedagogy. I had the privilege of attending panels by 5 of the 8 participants prior to beginning this project and had the opportunity to speak with them about their research so we were already acquainted when I began work on this study. The remaining 3 participants I identified through their written

work and sought them out at conference venues to witness their presentations and introduce myself. As a result of making face-to-face contact with each scholar, I was able to email and solicit participation for this study. The next section details my positionality with respect to these scholars.

Researcher Positionality

The goals of this project have grown from my own curiosity and interest in the area of communication education toward the development of pedagogy for social justice. The design of this project was to gather information about current practice from established scholars in the field already doing this work, so that interpretations of their pedagogy could be made and offered for future practice (my own and others interested in this approach). However, it was also necessary for me to convey these interests and goals to the participants in a way that invited and encouraged their participation. In order to do that, I felt that my own subject position became a necessary component of the research process.

First, as a graduate student researching the pedagogical practices of associate, and full professors in the field of communication, I am situated within this study across two different status levels. As a researcher, I am bound by the requirements of ethical practice to approach my participants with transparency and willingness to engage their perspectives with the goal of understanding and in order to co-create knowledge as a result of our interaction. As a student, I am in a lower status position than the professors who have already completed their degree programs, established their own competence as researchers, and have been granted

tenure. As a result, their position in relation to the research process has already been established, whereas mine is still in progress. Both of these positions represented tensions that I had to negotiate throughout the research process.

This distinction had both benefits and drawbacks that impacted the progression of the study. On one hand, as teachers who have self-identified in the process of conducting education for social justice, these participants were willing and interested to work with me on this project to further enhance their position as scholars in pursuit of a social justice agenda and set of goals. Also, as advisors who work with graduate students of their own, I suspect that they took an interest in furthering my development as a scholar through this project. Alternatively, because these are active, prolific scholars in the field, they are also busy people with responsibilities of their own to negotiate and finding time to schedule interviews with a student who was not in their department (or one of their advisees) sometimes proved challenging.

Besides my relative status position, I also considered my unique gender, race, and class positions as they related to the process of conducting research. As a female researcher of mixed heritage and lower middle-class status, I embody a position slightly different from the dominant norm. This position is further complicated by the fact that I was raised within a Eurocentric perspective, but one that conflicted with my lived experience. My own education served as the first public example of my socially constructed identity categories when, after spending kindergarten through 8th grade at a small rural school where my parents were both active on the school board, I went to the regional high school and was tracked into

regular (as opposed to honors) classes and counseled to apply to a vocational college rather than a university.

At the time, I assumed that my treatment was a result of my lower income status as a resident of the outlying rural area where "those people" lived. In fact, it was common for both teachers and administrators at the high school to comment on the kids who came from "that school" either to express surprise that we were capable of doing the work, or confirm their stereotypes that we were not smart, or capable enough to handle their curriculum. Ultimately, I did not discover that I was half-brown until after I began receiving junk mail in Spanish. I caught myself thinking that the people who sent it were poorly misinformed and presumptuous to try and figure out which language I spoke, besides, why would they think that I spoke Spanish? It was many years later before I understood that they were soliciting me based on my name alone since they had never seen the mostly White-looking me. I mention this here because it relates to the continuing development of both my understanding of myself as a racialized subject, and to the systems of racial oppression that operate in U.S. education.

Finally, in negotiating my interest in pedagogy for social justice with my research participants, I had to be clear and transparent about my interest in both the area as well as their particular practices for several reasons. The first, as mentioned previously, is that I can pass for White and am therefore automatically suspect (to a degree) in explorations of teaching for social justice and had to carefully negotiate my identity and positionality with my participants. Another reason this context matters is because the participants come from a spectrum of

gendered and raced positions that carry their own interests, biases, concerns, cautions, and hesitations for sharing their experiences. I had to show sensitivity and respect for their positionality as professors and participants. Finally, there was a very real potential when conducting this research to be viewed as an interloper. In fact, 1 of the 8 participants conducted her own mini-interview of me when we initially spoke to negotiate her participation. She specifically asked what *my* approach to social justice pedagogy was and how *I* negotiated all of the things that I was contacting her to conduct research about. Thus, the interloper fear was genuine, but I was able to articulate my respect for, and curiosity in, learning more about her perspective since she ultimately agreed to participate in the study.

Data Collection

The data for this study was gathered primarily from two sources: documents and interviews. The documents were those associated with specific classes taught by the participants engaged in the work of social justice as part of their pedagogy. The interviews were conducted subsequently with the professors who agreed to participate and share their documents. The rationale for these data collection methods is based on an interpretive qualitative framework that emphasizes rich description and contextual understanding of a given interaction, or set of interactions within a system. As Marshall and Rossman (2006) explained, "the strengths of qualitative studies should be demonstrated for research that is exploratory or descriptive and that stresses the importance of context, setting, and participants' frames of reference" (p. 54). As this study was indeed exploring the

nature of the pedagogy in use for social justice, qualitative methods and an interpretive framework were necessary. Qualitative research emphasizes the importance of the perspective of the research participants, and since this research is focused on understanding their pedagogy, examining their documents and conducting interviews with them were invaluable. The combination of these data sets provided a nuanced and multidimensional look at their particular social justice pedagogical perspective, and how they attempt to employ it in the classroom.

Document Analysis

According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), documents represent unobtrusive measures for collecting data, provide knowledge of the background, history, or context surrounding a specific setting, and "analysis of documents is potentially quite rich in portraying the values and beliefs of participants in the setting" (p. 160). In addition, Frey, Botan, and Kreps (2000) explained that textual analysis is one method that researchers can use to "describe the content, structure, and functions of the messages contained in texts" (p. 225). However, Hodder (2003) cautioned that, "different types of texts have to be understood in the contexts of their conditions of production and reading" (p. 156). This is especially important considering that, "the text can 'say' many different things in different contexts," and that, "the writing down of words often allows language and meaning to be controlled more effectively, and to be linked to strategies of centralization and codification" (Hodder, 2003, p. 157). Thus, analyzing syllabi and other documents created for the course is particularly useful in understanding the values and beliefs

of the instructors in this setting based on the content, structure, and function of the messages contained in the language and meanings of what has been written down and codified to guide their social justice oriented course.

The materials that give form to pedagogy are an untapped resource for understanding the nature of pedagogy for particular social purposes. Thompson (2007) examined the communicative strategies that teachers used when constructing and presenting their syllabi noting that little, other than prescriptive approaches, has been written on the subject. Instructors make conscious choices about the goals and objectives of a particular course, or approach to course material, when developing syllabi, assignment descriptions, rubrics for evaluation, lecture notes, learning activities, etc. These choices reflect a particular pedagogical philosophy that becomes enmeshed in the physical and intellectual matter of the course(s). With regard to social justice as a steering mechanism (both process and goal) for education, these materials presented a rich source for exploring the development and implementation of the pedagogy intended to get us there.

The documents I gathered included: syllabi, assignment descriptions, evaluation rubrics, and guidelines. I focused on these specific documents because they most commonly represent the documents created for teaching any class and, as such, outline the parameters of the pedagogy used by the instructor. Because these documents are completed in preparation for a course, many of the participants revise and re-use these documents from semester to semester, honing them with each iteration. These are also publicly available documents, for the most part, and constitute the visible representation of the instructor's pedagogy. In addition, I was

interested in any publications that the participants have produced in relation to their pedagogy. Publications represent another visible means for understanding the pedagogical choices that instructors have made and have chosen to share with the rest of the research community in their own interest area and with others. In total, I collected 30 syllabi from 8 participants (at least one from each), 31 detailed assignment descriptions, 11 evaluation rubrics, and 6 supplementary guidelines (i.e., discussion and participation, group work and project management, and how to). In addition, I referenced 25 scholarly articles and book chapters from the participants records of published research that were specifically related to their pedagogy. These documents were reviewed and coded, using an open coding strategy, for specific language and concepts relating to critical pedagogy of social justice and implementation strategies for their classrooms that will be discussed in the data analysis section. To expand and elaborate on the documents collected, I also completed interviews as part of my data set.

Interviews

Qualitative researchers rely on the interview as the "methodology designed to study speaking subjects," and understand that the processes of "asking questions and listening to others tell what they know, feel, and believe are the archetypal actions of the interview" (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002, p. 170). Bingham and Moore (1959) labeled interviews "conversation with a purpose" (cited in Lindlof and Taylor, 2002, p. 171) and elaborated on the numerous styles of interview available. However, Denzin (1978) clarified that interviews cover any number of topics

selected by the interviewer to give that person greater control over the respondent, making it talk that is for another's benefit. Thus, interviews quite literally assist people in sharing their views on things that happen outside of the interview context, where the researcher is not present. Hence, interviews are "particularly well suited to understand the social actor's experience and perspective" (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002, p. 172). The interviews I conducted were a specific means for triangulating the data collected from their documents to provide a greater amount of depth and complexity to their approaches employing social justice pedagogy.

I conducted 3 hour-long semi-structured interviews with each participant. I was interested in hearing how participants used their pedagogy in social justice identified classes and/or across their repertoire of communication classes. The interviews served as extension and follow up to the document analysis to extend the data in both depth and breadth. The document analysis portion of my study provided the substance of the pedagogy while the interview portion explained the choices that led to the development of the substance. The perspectives of each practitioner added depth and multilayered richness to the materials as well as further explanation and clarification of them.

The interviews themselves were semi-structured around the themes that emerged from the analysis of their documents with regard to their pedagogy. Following Kvale (1996), I approached the interview as "a construction site for knowledge" where we could discuss themes of interest (p. 2). Using an interview guide of topics and general questions, I scheduled interviews with each participant that took place over the phone, in most cases. I was able to conduct six of the

interviews in-person while attending conferences and able to travel to conduct one interview. I was also able to use web-based video calling (Skype®) to conduct all three interviews with 1 of the participants because we both shared the necessary technology. In total, I conducted 25 formal interviews over a 15-month period from June 2010 through November 2011.

Participants were guided into our initial conversation when I provided an overview and the purpose of the project and asked the interviewees to describe their perspective on social justice pedagogy and for any materials that would assist me in understanding their perspective. Questions were framed in open-ended, non-directive language to invite maximum comfort in disclosure. The second interview was conducted after examining their documents (both those provided as part of their pedagogy as well as their published articles) and interviewees were prompted to expand on elements of their pedagogy culled from the document analysis. As the interview continued, issues and topics emerged that were not part of the original conceptual framework developed from the document analysis and I asked the interviewees to expand on them with regard to their pedagogy. The third interview served as a member check and opportunity for the interviewees, who are also communication researchers themselves, to offer explanatory mechanisms for their own pedagogical choices. These interviews were digitally recorded for data analysis (when permissible) and stored on a password protected hard drive to preserve participant confidentiality. The next section describes how the data were analyzed.

Data Analysis

In order to begin analyzing the data, it first had to be "reduced into words," which are the units of analysis in qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10). The documents were already textual, but the interviews were not. Thus, I labored through the process of transcribing 27-hours of interview recordings verbatim, but without the level of detail required for stricter projects such as discourse or conversation analysis, which resulted in 466 typed pages of transcripts. In order to keep my data organized and easily accessible, I created both a digital and hard copy archive organized by type of data (documents or interviews) and by participant. The hard copies were stored in a locked file cabinet to protect the anonymity of participants. The digital copies were stored on a password-protected computer as well as on two separate portable hard drives to prevent data loss in the event of technological failure. In order to keep track of the various items compiled from each individual, I created a data inventory table (see Appendix A) and updated it after each successive interview. Once all of the data were reduced to word documents, I began the process of coding them.

The data were analyzed using open coding strategies and the constant comparative approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to assess categories as they emerged during data collection. Because the goal of this project was to understand and articulate specific teaching techniques and strategies being used in communication pedagogy for social justice, open coding provided the most useful analytic tool for this specific data. Open coding allows the researcher to break down, examine, compare, conceptualize, and categorize themes that emerge from

the data. Using an immersive approach (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) means analyzing emergent themes in order to create a more holistic perspective of situational phenomena and retain the voices of the participants in ways that would not be possible by applying pre-existing themes. The constant comparative approach allows the researcher to identify potential themes early in the data collection process and then use them in the collection of future data as a method for fleshing out and articulating concepts identified in early stages. In this case, interviews focused in on themes identified in the document analysis to gain further information about pedagogical perspective, design elements, and implementation of the curriculum for the stated social justice goals. The balance of this section describes my specific process in analyzing the different types of data that I collected.

Documents

I initially read through all 30 syllabi noting the different types of information included and marking any sections that alluded to or specifically indicated a social justice emphasis. Each document included a course description, course objectives, overview of the course, overview of assignments, calendar of events and topics, and instructor information. The places where social justice vocabulary and content were indicated most often included the overview, course description, and course objectives. After noting these places, the specific language used to indicate a particular social justice issue or emphasis were compiled into a master list and compared for the different areas of overlap. The specific terms and concepts from this list were then used in the creation of interview questions for participants to find

out how they linked the language in their syllabi to their specific social justice approach to pedagogy.

The specific assignment descriptions for each course were analyzed in the same way to see what language and terminology was included and if the social justice goals of the course were evident in the description. There were marked differences between the language used in classes that included social justice in the title (i.e., *Communication, Culture, and Social Justice*; *Communication, Prisons, and Social Justice*; *Communication, Democracy, and Justice*) compared with those that covered topics related to social justice issues (i.e., *Whiteness in the Media*, *Communication and Gender*, *Communication and Power*). Courses that used the term social justice in the title also used it in the course descriptions, the goals for the course, and the requirements for the assignments. Courses that did not use the term in the title still included it as a goal for the course and for the assignments, but it was framed as an outcome that students could work toward with their new knowledge of the content from the course. These differences were grouped for further comparison and later combined with interview responses to illuminate the socially constructed nature of the course approach to various social justice topics from the perspective of the communication discipline.

The assessment rubrics and guidelines were examined similarly by noting the places where the specific language and terminology referenced social justice issues and grouped according to similarities. In addition, articles published by participants that addressed their pedagogical approach in general, or specific examples of pedagogy enacted in classrooms were also examined for the language,

themes, and descriptions they included for a social justice approach to pedagogy in communication courses. Combined, all of these documents provided one set of codes from which to approach the interview data to see how they could be elaborated, refined, or revised in comparison with the responses provided by participants.

While I certainly did not approach the data devoid of background in this area, my intention was to sort through these documents without a preconceived list of codes to see what emerged. The analysis of these documents provided fodder for the development of codes used to establish the stated goals and intentions of social justice pedagogy in specific communication classrooms through the publicly disseminated information about the courses and assignments. Based on the information within these documents, and the codes that I defined out of them, I was able to develop preliminary categories of data that were expanded through interviews with these self-identified social justice educators to gain more in-depth details, descriptions, and explanations of their pedagogical styles and methods. Having explored the *what* of their pedagogical practice, the interviews were aimed at hearing and understanding the *why* behind them.

Interviews

Transcribing the interviews required listening to them repeatedly, which gave me greater familiarity with the content, and made working with the transcripts easier because I could still hear their voices when I was reading their words in text form. In the initial reading, I marked specific points when the participants discussed

their pedagogy, pedagogical choices they had made, and any references they made to what effect they thought their pedagogy had on students.

The comparative analysis method allowed me to develop categories from initial data that were extended, expanded, developed, refined, or rejected with further data collection. These categories were then used to develop a broader conceptual framework. The comparative method required a constant tacking back and forth between data and categories to check the fit and relevance of the categories created to remain faithful to the voices of the participants in the data. The application of the constructivist paradigm also helped to shift the focus from a realist frame, which focuses on finding the categories that are *there*, to a relativist frame, that emphasizes the multiple perspectives that exist, which ultimately allowed me to focus on developing *one* view of these categories.

Since the pedagogy that I examined has not been robustly researched or theorized in communication, this method was an ideal means for exploring the conceptual frameworks that contribute to it. Identification of the aspects of the phenomena under study and observation of patterns in the data illustrated the phenomena with increased complexity. Also, the inductive process provided a contextually anchored framework that could be applied back to the situation from which it was gathered.

An important component of this process was the development of analytic codes out of the data as opposed to using pre-existing categories, as is the case in deductive research. Critical pedagogy for social justice in communication is new, it is developing, it relies on a number of different practitioners and perspectives, and it

has not been theorized as yet. There are no pre-existing codes that could be applied to the data that I collected that would *do* justice to the complexity that I found. That is why I began with the analysis of documents related to the implementation of each participant's pedagogy. Syllabi, assignment descriptions and rubrics for evaluating them, and various guidelines for class behavior all marked places where practitioners indicated their pedagogical perspectives and the means by which they intended to implement them. Publications offered a place where these decisions have been reported on and incorporated into the scholarly conversations occurring in the field. Interview responses provided insight and perspective into their writing on the topic by offering their own reflections and sense making. Analyzing these documents allowed me to develop early analytic themes presented by their public documentation that were expanded upon in further interviews. The following section addresses the ways that this process demonstrated validity.

Trustworthiness/Validity

In qualitative research, as in all other kinds of research, there is an expectation that the research conducted is trustworthy, that the methods followed were sufficient for the questions being asked. Lincoln and Guba (1985) highlighted the issues central to this kind of inquiry that have been developed into questions that qualitative research must answer: "Do we believe in the claims that a research report puts forward? On what grounds do we judge these as credible? What evidence is put forward to support the claims? How do we evaluate it? Are the claims potentially useful for the problematic we are concerned with?" (Marshall &

Rossman, 2011, p. 40) While the paradigm of qualitative research does not rely on the traditional logical empiricist frame of reliability, validity, objectivity, and generalizability, they share an emphasis on validating the soundness of the data. Validity has most recently been referred to as trustworthiness in qualitative circles (Marshall & Rossman, 2011), and refers to the goodness or soundness of the research.

My trustworthiness as a researcher in this setting depended upon my intention to co-construct knowledge with my participants in an effort to understand their approaches to pedagogy for social justice in communication. The concepts for this study emerged from my own interest in teaching for social justice in the field of communication and the particular challenges of how to go about it. My goal in this study was to gather more information about how others are engaging in this same process for a number of reasons. First, and foremost, is the belief that we need theoretical approaches to guide our implementation of this pedagogy in communication classrooms. Second, is the interest I have in pursuing a communication education research agenda that identifies and implements the best examples, strategies, cases, topics, and methods for teaching the field of communication. Third is a desire to learn from the particularly skilled practitioners in the field what they consider the best examples, cases, and methods to accomplish the goals of social justice in our field. Finally, because the movement in the field is towards addressing oppression and marginalization as a result of institutionalized structures like higher education, it follows that an analysis of this sort will serve to stimulate further conversation about how this transition can be accomplished.

With these goals, then, the trustworthiness of my data follows logically given that I gathered specific examples from the actual practices of my participants. Focusing in on the documents that they use each semester in the classes that they teach provided one way to ground their practice in specific classrooms. These are the documents that were distributed for a given course and that guided their pedagogy throughout the semester. In one sense, this lends a form of validity to the data. However, the documents that represent their pedagogical choices are public, for the most part, which means that they are open to multiple interpretations. That is why I conducted interviews along with the document analysis in order to facilitate the participants' explanations, and interpretations of the material. Extending the data culled from the documents with the perspectives and sense making offered from the instructor's perspective added to this kind of validity. Focusing on document analysis and interviews in this way provided layers to the data collected, which added depth, complexity, and trustworthiness to the overall results.

To ensure trustworthiness in the data, I triangulated by including multiple types as well as engaging in member checks with participants throughout the data collection process. I was able to determine when I had reached theoretical sufficiency (Dey, 1999) when I determined that further interviews and data collection would result in more of the same findings. For example, by the second interview participants would reiterate some of the same anecdotes (perhaps because of the length of time that had passed between interviews, or perhaps because these were the best examples that they had to offer of their perspective), thus, I determined these statements were their most coherent descriptions of their

perspective. Additionally, many of their documents shared a similar template for each class they taught and it was clear that they used these specific chunks of text in each syllabus rather than creating new ones for each class.

Conclusion

Although social justice sounds like an easily identifiable set of terms, research has shown that it is not. The multiple conceptions of what it means, whom it is meant to benefit, and how it is meant to be enacted prove that this is true. With regard to our pedagogy in the field of communication, this is even more clearly the case. As the concept of social justice as a process, goal, and pedagogy grows, it is necessary to track what it means and this study was an initial attempt to do that. My goal was to contribute to an understanding of what critical pedagogy for social justice in communication *means*. This research provides an initial mode for conceptualizing the associated concepts and definitions that are being used to guide the work of practitioners. In addition, this conceptualization provides grounding for further work by others trying to construct their own explanatory frameworks. The next two chapters include the analysis of my findings.

CHAPTER 4

PERCEPTIONS, DESCRIPTIONS, AND CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE PEDAGOGY IN COMMUNICATION CLASSROOMS

"Life's a journey, not a destination"

~ Aerosmith

The purpose of this research project is to examine the perspectives of pedagogy held by social justice educators in communication. Research on communication education adds to the storehouse of knowledge on the best ways to teach our discipline and the social justice approach represents an emerging trend in communication pedagogy (ex. Frey et al, 1996; Hartnett, 2010; Johnson, 2004). Within this space, research has emphasized teaching about how communication theory can be applied to social justice exigencies (Artz, 1998), the confluence of race and multiple identity positions in the classroom (Hendrix, Jackson, & Warren, 2003), whiteness as a component of interracial and intercultural communication (Cooks, 2003; Martin & Davis, 2001), racism and neoliberalism (Giroux, 2003), antiracist pedagogy, identities, and performance (Treinen & Warren, 2004; Warren, 1999, 2001), among others, with a significant portion focusing on how teaching about these topics move us closer to social justice. In the current examination, I shift the

focus to self-identified teacher/scholars who articulate a social justice orientation to the discipline across all the classes they teach. Previous research has reported studies on individual classrooms, service learning projects, or special topics courses while this study attempts to bring a wide-angle lens to the work of social justice in communication education by listening to the experiences of the people who are in the process of doing it.

The move to incorporate critical perspectives into educational contexts in U.S. classrooms grew out of a long history of progressive educational philosophy that can be traced from John Dewey's attempts to link individual learning to the project of creating a democratic society (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003). Furthermore, several influential figures in early American education, including Miles Horton, founder of the Highlander Folk School, and Herbert Kohl, who provided the impetus for the Open School Movement, have been cited as sparks that helped ignite the Civil Rights movement based on their political beliefs about the democratizing potential of education (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003). Maxine Greene has echoed the concerns that Dewey advanced a century ago in contemporary arguments for a democracy that must be lived in social as well as political arenas, including education, and has joined her voice with more recent philosophers, Ivan Illich, Paulo Freire, Michael Apple, Henry Giroux, and Peter McLaren to construct a critical pedagogy for the current climate (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003). In communication specifically, Frey and Carragee (2007) have published a three volume series on communication activism culling examples from applied communication research that emphasize how communication inquiry can impact

marginalized or displaced populations. Furthermore, the newest addition to this line of research is a volume on communication activism pedagogy (Frey & Palmer, forthcoming) that highlights the specific pedagogical approaches taken by scholar/teachers incorporating activism into their courses for social change.

Inasmuch as they have been able to attain tenure and advance their agenda for social justice through communication teaching and research, the 8 participants in this project represent successful examples that can offer insight into their potentially commonly held principles and/or shared commitments and practices. As described in the Research Methods chapter, the 8 participants in this study are all self-identified social justice educators in the field of communication, 4 women and 4 men. They have described themselves in these terms, used social justice as a concept in their own teaching, research, and publications, and have established a reputation as scholars who pursue social justice interests as part of their vocation—teaching in communication classrooms. As such, they are interesting subjects for research given that they are a diverse and far-flung group who know *of* each other, but do not necessarily *know* each other, making them a compelling sample of scholar/teachers working toward similar goals but not necessarily in conjunction. In taking the time to participate in this study, they have indicated an interest in sharing their perspectives and descriptions of their practice for the purposes of advancing pedagogical research in communication (pedagogy specific to our discipline), as well as for the purpose of assisting others who may wish to follow in their footsteps. They were chosen because of their self-identified status and visibility within the discipline as established scholar/teachers from various

specialty areas so that their perspectives could be analyzed, compared, and synthesized.

Each participant is a tenured professor of communication at an institution of higher education in North America. No two participants are at the same institution and they are spread across the continent at public, private, and liberal arts colleges. For this study, my interests were mainly in understanding their perspectives on social justice pedagogy and how they described what they were doing thus making interviews the logical choice for data collection; these were conducted over the telephone and via web-based teleconferencing (Skype®). The purpose of this chapter is to answer the following research question:

- RQ1: How do social justice educators in the field of communication think and talk about their work?

Participants disclosed that they think about their work as a way of being and a process, which they conceptualize as part and parcel of what the field of communication is already about—changing people by changing the way we communicate. Through their narratives and descriptions, these aspects were developed based on how they perceive their work, the way they describe it, and how they communicate it to others. The bulk of this chapter delves deeper into their perspectives to show how they indicated these stances and the ways that they describe putting them into play in their teaching for the express goals of social justice. More specifically, I begin by defining what they mean by a "way of being" and a "process" and then develop each concept with examples from their experience. In laying out these descriptions, I explore how they have conceptualized

their work within the field of communication across each of their interest areas to understand how the social justice approach fits into the discipline from their perspectives.

"A Way of Being"

The social justice work is not just teaching for me… My selfhood is invoked in all of it.

~TF

It's always a labor to do this work… for me it's a commitment that goes beyond what I would have to do professionally, for my job.

~CW

The key thing for me is I'm trying to perform a kind of engaged rationality… It's really about a way of being in the world.

~WH

Social justice educators in this study explained that their pedagogy and research are more than a job, rather, they are a way of being in the world that goes well beyond their job description and implicates their notions of self. They explained how their perspectives are intimately connected to their lived experiences in the world and their background influences. In this way, they align with a critical communication pedagogy as outlined by Fassett and Warren (2007) that "is more than the act of research, more than publishing to get a job, finish a degree, receive tenure or a promotion; it is about developing a critical vocation, a critical relationship with the world and allowing that positionality to guide and inform our everyday lives" (p. 108). As the quotes above demonstrate, these

educators have already established a critical relationship with the world and are using it to guide their everyday interactions in their role as professors.

TF clearly explained that her selfhood is a part of the social justice work that she does in her teaching, research, and service making it more than just a job; it is an outgrowth of her identity. This sentiment was reiterated by CW who explained that having a social justice perspective in her teaching is not a requirement, nor is it something she is acknowledged or rewarded for. In fact, at her previous institution, she was told that she would never receive tenure because her dean did not like her social justice oriented research. Thus, her commitment to pursuing a social justice agenda in her work goes beyond what she has had to do to achieve tenure or meet the requirements of her job. For both of these women, their social justice pedagogy is not simply something that they *do* but is something that grows out of *who they are*—members of an unequal society concerned with the direction, growth, and potential for that society to become more equitable. The same can also be said for WH, a White male, who explained that his social location has allowed him to do things that people in other bodies would have encountered more resistance doing. He changed institutions immediately prior to the beginning of this study to take a department chair position and subsequently revamped the entire undergraduate curriculum to include a social justice emphasis so that "we're making a department wherein social justice is no longer the freaky thing; it's what we do."

For these educators, social justice means a broader commitment to how they carry themselves in the world. WH explained that he is trying to perform a kind of "engaged rationality" through his teaching, research, activism, and service that can

serve as a model for others (colleagues and students alike). As other critical educators have noted, "you can't really do critical pedagogy; it is more of a state of mind" (Wink, 2005, p. 145). As a state of mind, there are specific ways that critical pedagogy is made manifest in the teaching behaviors of social justice educators. Indeed, Wink (2005) recorded numerous examples from her own experiences putting critical pedagogy into action resulting in these thoughts,

> We don't do critical pedagogy; we live it. We are challenged to live our beliefs. Each of us has a set of beliefs about values and education. These beliefs come to life every day in our behaviors in the classroom. (p. 145)

Living their beliefs in the classroom is one of the things participants noted to differentiate between their work as a critical vocation versus merely a job. For example, TF explained her perspective that the social justice imperative calls for a different type of engagement with the material than is expected from a traditional program of research.

> TF: The social justice imperative as I practice and understand it is, you're critiquing and working to transform oppressive systems of power and you're looking at the connection between those structures and the agency of personhood… The social justice work is not just teaching for me. It's not just writing a chapter about some distant race, or whatever. My selfhood is invoked in all of it and then it's also the service work I do on campus, so I feel the weight of the institution in ways that some of my colleagues, who are not attuned to issues of power, don't… It's a general way of being in the world.

For TF, living the social justice imperative includes "speaking up and speaking out" in all of her roles—as teacher, colleague, researcher, and now, administrator. Therefore, social justice pedagogy as a way of being is about living the commitments associated with social justice work in all aspects of her life. To which the other participants added their support claiming that social justice is not something you do only in the classroom, it is how you live.

CW stated it plainly, claiming that, "as a communication educator, if there is injustice in the world, I have to talk about it." She continued by explaining that she cannot ignore issues of injustice to conduct research on something else that is not related. For her, it is not productive to separate her research from the issues that she is passionate about and concerned with addressing in her academic work. She explained that while she has chosen to make all of her work about injustice you do not have to and many of her colleagues do not. However, she is not alone among participants in this study in explaining how they have aligned their research with their teaching and their critical perspective to illuminate their social justice approach as a way of being in the world.

As stated previously, all participants are tenured professors who have sufficiently developed their scholarly identity through research and incorporated a clear stance on social justice as part of that identity. Across their teaching, research, and service, they have established these identity positions as being a particular kind of scholar focused on conducting particular kinds of research. These scholars were specifically chosen because of their attention to teaching and have each presented research about their pedagogy at regional and national conferences, and published research about their teaching in discipline specific journals. In light of these commitments, it follows that these educators have conceived of their work as more than just a program of research but as a way of being in the world while doing the work they do. Social justice educators in this study further described their work as a way of being that accounts for their positionality in the world, is grounded in critical reflexivity, and engages resistance. The remainder of this section examines

their explanations of these concepts and discusses how they contribute to their understanding of a critical vocation in communication studies.

A "Way of Being" That Reflects Positionality

The personal political components of the social justice approach espoused by all 8 of the participants are directly linked to their identities and the material realities associated with them. To be clear, each time participants are described herein I am using their self-expressed identities to frame and characterize their comments. Of the participants, 1 is a trans-identified White female, 1 is a lesbian White female, 2 are heterosexual Black females, 1 is a gay Black male, 1 is a heterosexual Black male, and 2 are heterosexual White males, all are able-bodied, all enjoy a comfortable middle-class economic position, and all reported explicitly referencing these identity components in and through their teaching. Social justice educators in this study each explained how they teach from their embodied place in the world and how that impacts both their perspective on social justice issues and the way they teach about the material. Being explicit about their social justice perspective (and where it comes from) includes drawing on these aspects of their identity when they introduce the critical paradigm to students in their courses.

Pedagogy is embodied action in classrooms with students and these educators described being particularly aware of their own bodies as part of the teaching and learning process. As other critical educators have noted, "critical communication pedagogy is about identity, about subjectivity, about who we are as people, people who are invested and produced in the process of education" (Fassett

& Warren, 2007, p. 71). Indeed, pedagogy is always and already political and educators are not neutral bodies in classroom spaces (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1988; hooks, 1994). Additionally, Kincheloe (2005) explained that,

> Recognition of these political complications of schooling is a first step for critical pedagogy-influenced educators in developing a social activist teacher persona. As teachers gain these insights, they understand that cultural, race, class, and gender forces have shaped all elements of the pedagogical act. They also discover that a central aspect of democratic education involves addressing these dynamics as they systematically manifest themselves. (p. 2)

These dynamics manifest themselves in the classrooms of the social justice educators interviewed here through the content material as well as through the embodied presence of the instructor, and as such become a part of the content material for the course. AP, a gay Black male, referred to the embodied presence of the instructor in the classroom with respect to gender, race, and sexuality issues.

> AP: No one is talking about the intricacies of what you do, how you do it, and the presence of your body in the classroom. And the complexity of what happens when you become the pedagogy. You're not just *doing* the pedagogy; you *become* the pedagogy. You're it. And when students see you… when students engage you, they are engaging the discipline.

AP continued by discussing the pressure placed on teacher bodies from marginalized positions when you become the living embodiment of the discipline and how that has impacted his performance of "teacher" with his students from his social justice perspective. By using themselves as a starting point, these educators explained trying to show students how the social justice issues being discussed are linked to the material experiences of bodies in the world, especially in discussions about racial and gender stereotypes, profiling, power, and social location.

For example, SB related using her experiences as a Black woman in search of make-up that would match her skin tone in her affluent Southern neighborhood.

She explained to students that she did not find what she was looking for until she visited the "south side" of town where the retail establishments catered to the demographic majority population in that area. This example is similar to one Peggy McIntosh (1994) uses in her description of the invisible knapsack of privileges that White people are accorded when she questions the use of "flesh-colored" items, like bandages, that are clearly meant for Caucasian hued flesh. Drawing attention to the seemingly simple act of purchasing make-up and then complicating it with a racial and socioeconomic lens is one way that SB explained using her experiences to connect with students and expand their understanding of social stratification based on gender, race, and class. Remarkably, in her eyes, this is one example that seems to gain and keep the students attention in ways that other data on race, marginality, and oppression do not. Thus, she explained using these events from her life more often than not because they seem to have a greater impact on the students when discussing social justice issues.

In some cases, instructors reported having limited opportunities for ***not*** incorporating their positionality as their bodies were already being read and evaluated by the students making their allegiances to the material clear. TF explained that she is "someone who is trans-identified and a gender queer and perceived to be a lesbian," which has led to vitriolic moments in her classroom when she is discussing gender and sexuality. While teaching a course titled, *Gender and Communication*, TF explained encountering student resistance to their readings of her physical body in relationship to the material.

> TF: Students often think they're not sure what my sex is by the time the [lecture] is done… I am the only one doing this kind of pedagogy with an

> embodiment that the students find threatening… So, student resistance to the course was profound.

As a result of these experiences, TF explained that she has had to do significant background work to ground the material from her class in the theoretical perspectives of critical theory, gender, and performance to try and circumvent these negative responses to her particular body. She reflected that students want to associate critical literature with people "who are just angry" as opposed to gaining a complex understanding of the structures of power and oppression that have put some people (and not others) in these underprivileged spaces.

With regard to gender specifically, Bordo (1993) examined cultural images of female bodies that were read for signs of deviance, judged against the unattainable standards for beauty promulgated in Western culture, and found wanting. Further, Cooks (2007) considered the ways that her female teacher's body was read, and critiqued, to produce questions of credibility and capability regarding her ability to teach effectively. Further, Fassett and Warren (2007) elaborated stating, "In classrooms, the teacher is open for students' assumptions, students' questions, and students critique. Teachers are texts" (p. 56). Thus, a reading of teachers' bodies as texts influences multiple aspects of student engagement with the course, the material, and the instructor. Hence, these educators indicated their awareness that their bodies are already being read, that those readings have consequences for the students' interaction with the material, and that their positionality is already a component of their pedagogy whether they deliberately invoke it or not.

Critical communication pedagogy is concerned with identities and, more specifically, the ways those identities are constituted in and through communication

(Fassett & Warren, 2007). By incorporating their identity positions and engaging the readings of their teacher bodies as potentially problematic, the participants in this study indicate that their social justice pedagogy is more than just a set of professional requirements for their job, but a way of moving and being in the world. From their embodied subject positions, these teachers report approaching the material in their courses to show how it has material consequences on bodies differentially located in the social world. Teaching students to read the word and the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987) includes asking them to reflect on the ways that they are implicated in structures of domination and oppression.

We teach who we are (Palmer, 1998), thus each instructor discussed how they approach the material, how they relate to it, and the different ways that they rely on their embodied subject position to illuminate and lend support to their social justice perspective. In their descriptions of how they think about their work, study participants often invoked their selfhood as part of the curriculum, as part of the content being read by the students in relationship to the material. Whether it be as a Black female teaching interracial communication, a trans-identified White female teaching about gender, a White male teaching about power, or a Black male teaching about culture, all respondents included discussions of their embodied subject position in the world as part of the content for the course and their strategies in teaching it. Their commitment to teaching from a social justice perspective is more than a job, but a way of being and is firmly anchored in their positionality. This way of being springs from their embodiment and experience of the world, but is nourished by the process of critical self-examination.

A "Way of Being" Grounded in Critical Reflexivity

For the educators in this study, living their commitments to social justice is more than simply teaching, it is a way of being that includes practicing critical self-reflexivity. Reflection implies a form of looking at the self or past experiences, while the impetus for a critical form of reflection includes looking in ways that highlight relationships of power. By contrast, reflexivity "suggests an important motion, back and forth, between one's actions and how those implicate one in social phenomena" (Fassett & Warren, 2007, p. 48). CW made a compelling distinction between application and implication claiming that we (social justice educators) need to differentiate between applying concepts as one would apply a coat of paint (un-reflexively) to understanding how we are all implicated in these concepts and thus bear some responsibility for examining (and perhaps changing) our behavior as a result. In arguing for critical communication pedagogy, Fassett and Warren (2007) state that, "doing critical communication pedagogy is about holding ourselves accountable for the ways we exist within the institutions that have shaped us" (p. 88). For these educators, practicing reflexivity includes seeing themselves in the structures of power under study, so that they can begin to reflect on their own social location and interrogate their place within the larger social structures.

RM, a White male, teaches an online course titled *Communication and Power* that introduces students to the major conversations in critical cultural theory about power, oppression, indoctrination, and the communicative construction of these structures within a society. Interaction in the course occurs mainly through the online discussion boards and, during our conversation, he shared an experience

where one of his students used that space to engage him, as the teacher, about his behavior with respect to the material.

> RM: [She'll say] well, you're doing this, you know? And I try to absorb that with as good spirited nature as I can and we have really interesting debates. I'll say, do you think so? I'm open to that. How am I indoctrinating? And help me, help me not to do it. You know, don't just accuse me of it but help me to envision a completely non-indoctrinating arena.

Fassett and Warren (2007) cite reflexivity as an essential condition for critical communication pedagogy and state that, "reflexivity is not something that we do, but something we practice, not an end result, but rather a process" (p. 50). Here, RM shared a moment that gave him pause to consider his own position with respect to the material as the teacher using his power to engage the students in a critique of power. He offered this example as one way that he engages in the ongoing process of reflexivity called for above. He also explained his interpretation of the way that the online space balanced some components of power in the classroom but exacerbated others and how this conversation brought those differences into sharp relief for him. Thus, as part of a way of being, social justice educators in this study reported both their own practices of reflexivity and their goals in modeling those same skills for their students as part of their pedagogy.

> Being a critical scholar… is not about escaping your implication or complicity in systems of power, but, rather, about living there in that uncomfortable space, in that tension, and seeking change not just from those around you but from yourself as well. (Fassett & Warren, 2007, p. 88)

Living in that uncomfortable space is a necessary part of enacting a social justice pedagogy, as several of the participants can attest. TF explained how she is stimulated to reflexivity when students in her classes are confronted with their privilege and react negatively towards her and the material.

> TF: I sometimes react to the vitriolic responses of students who are confronting their privilege, because that's generally what's happening, and I feel bad. I start to question my own pedagogy. And I think some of that's healthy, because you think did I overstep? Did I misuse power? Those questions are important.

Considering those questions is how TF engages in reflexivity and how she explained her process of thinking through her own placement within structures of power and her engagement of those topics in the classroom. She continued by noting that social justice pedagogy requires you to put your body on the line and ask your students to do the same while constantly analyzing the affective dimension, being aware of power and how it is operating so you know when to push and when to pull back, when to help people get support beyond the classroom and also how to take care of yourself when your own triggers and issues come to the surface.

Some of those triggers are surprising to the participants when they do surface and are cause for even greater attention to reflexivity by the teacher. DC, a Black male, related a recent experience from his *Race and Media* course where his students wrote reaction papers to the film *The Blind Side* (2009). He explained first how watching the film was a revelation for one of his Black male students whose own life paralleled the life of the main character in the story, and then how poorly the student was able to articulate his responses in the assignment. As DC reflected further, he explained that this student did not appear to have benefitted from the supposedly better life he had by being adopted into an affluent White family. However, the biggest issue DC cited was when his experiences with low performing students impacted his overall view of minority students.

> DC: The frustrating part for me has been consistently that I have students who are minority students who just don't excel and I hate the fact that I am surprised when they are top performers in the class.

In the same *Race and Media* course, DC had a Black female student who was "a brilliant, brilliant, brilliant student who just had a wonderful writing style, [who] could compete with pretty much anyone in the class," but he recalled being surprised at the quality of her work when he first read it. This example indicated to him how even he is impacted by stereotypes and deficit thinking regarding students from underrepresented populations. In this instance, he cited engagement in reflexivity that helped to bring his assumptions to the fore so that he could critique them against his values and beliefs in a social justice approach to education.

Hartnett (2010) offered a comprehensive and thoughtful reflection of teaching from a social justice orientation. His article details specific high and low points when doing social justice as part of your scholarly work. In his words, doing social justice work requires joyful commitment to the process of working for change and improving the world through research and teaching. He explains that this work can be challenging and disheartening but that it can also provide some of the most exciting and rewarding moments in a teaching career. Social justice educators in this study admitted to being well aware of the benefits and drawbacks of teaching from this perspective. They candidly discussed frustration and burnout as easily as they shared their triumphant moments, which is further evidence that their approach to teaching in communication classrooms is more than simply a job, it is a way of being. They reflected that they could no more consider giving up teaching

this way than they could detach a part of themselves—a piece of their identity—even when their frustrations hit a peak.

> TF: I used to feel that if I wasn't speaking up and speaking out at every conceivable opportunity that I was selling out…but the thing that I have watched from the people I've most respected is they… know how to balance self-care with the commitment to social justice… This is a marathon; it's not a sprint. And so that means that in a semester I [may] need to teach a couple of sections of Intro to Comm and step away from the theories of gender class. When I do that, that doesn't mean that I give up, that I'm any less engaged. It just means that I want to do this work for a very long time. And, so, I have to be careful about how I do it and sustaining myself in an institution that doesn't support it.

TF's honest and candid reflection indicates her commitment to living the social justice imperative as part of a critical vocation—a way of doing the work of social justice pedagogy that is more than just a job, it is a way of being and moving through the world. Her comments are representative of others made by participants indicating their long-term engagement with the project of social justice as well as the nature of it as part of the self who is doing the work.

A "Way of Being" that Encounters Resistance

Social justice educators in this study also reported that this way of being in the world is not without drawbacks—problems, sticking points, and other forms of student resistance. Many of the examples already provided by participants can attest to the kinds of resistance they described meeting as they enact this way of being in their classrooms. Previous research on teaching social justice issues in communication classrooms has provided insight into how students experience and respond to alternative pedagogies (see Cooks & Sun, 2002). In fact, Cooks (2003) explained how resistance surfaced in her interracial communication course and was

"framed around discussion of privilege, guilt, and responsibility" (p. 254). As other authors have noted, White students can get caught in the paralyzing space of guilt and pain when they realize how they are implicated in the dominant White power structure that has been so oppressive to other populations throughout history (Fassett & Warren, 2007). When Tatum (1994) discussed teaching White students about racism, she explained how they can respond to the cognitive dissonance they experience as a result of this new knowledge with denial and withdrawal (both physical and mental). Hence, the predominantly privileged student population that most of the participants teach have had little background experience with social justice issues. Therefore, one of the most frequently reported responses by participants about students' reaction to the material, embodiment, and critical perspective of the educators in this study was denial.

SB, a Black female, teaches an interracial communication course at a large public university in the South. She typically has a student population that is roughly 30% African American, 60% White, with students from all other ethnic groups making up the final 10%. In this class, she reported encountering resistance in two highly noticeable ways when students first resisted using her professional title to refer to her and when they resisted the definition of racism presented in the course materials and text.

> SB: I do notice that sometimes when I'm teaching… that students opt not to call me "Dr." They'll call me Miss or Ms or Mrs. and, I'm thinking, do you even know the difference between them? But more importantly, why don't you think I have my PhD when it's on the syllabus and that's how I introduce myself?

This behavior indicated to SB that something was amiss in the way that students read her embodiment and positionality within the university and prompted her to pursue this topic further as part of her program of research. In addition, she reported that students consistently resist the definition of racism that is grounded in organizations and structures making it a *system* of conferred advantage for mostly White populations and disadvantage for populations of color. SB explained that her students resist a structural definition of racism and want to ground it in individual actions and behavior. In this she is not alone as DC reported similar experiences with students when teaching his courses on media, race, and identity. In fact, half of the participants reported similar experiences when they specifically invoke the term racism and discuss it as part of their social justice oriented course. Their experiences align with Tatum's (1994) findings that a common response to the discomfort experienced by majority students as they come to grips with the reality of social inequities is to "deny the validity of the information that is being presented to them" (p. 464).

A second identifiable aspect of student resistance reported by the educators under study emphasized credibility, or more specifically, the lack of credibility accorded to some of these participants when teaching their subject matter. Hendrix (1998) explored the race related components of credibility in college classrooms finding that Black professors had to work harder than their White colleagues to be seen as credible by Black and White students alike, except when it was in an area where they were perceived to have expertise as a result of their racial category (i.e., a Black professor teaching about Black culture). Noticeably, White professors in her

study were perceived to be credible on a number of subjects that were not related to their racial category. As SB's experience, noted above, illustrates, credibility was also an issue for some of the participants in this study.

DC related his own experience with student resistance through denial and dismissal of the material presented in his class. He shared examples from his course evaluations where students had not only denied the material but his experiences with it claiming that his explanation of race and culture was "way off" or that the interpretations of experiences he had provided in class were just plain "wrong." DC explained how these responses indicated that the students failed to see him as a credible source for the material, preferring, instead, to assign validity to their own experiences. This example seems at odds with the research findings provided by Hendrix (1998) because we would assume DC to have credibility discussing race and culture as a Black male professor, unless we recall Tatum's (1994) experiences teaching White students about racism and the tendency of students experiencing discomfort to deny validity, and in this case credibility, to the messenger.

A third space where participants reported experiencing resistance was with respect to topics, issues, and embodiments of sexuality. Three of the 8 participants self-identify as either homosexual or transgender, marking them as having an "alternative sexuality" to the majority of their students. Each explained the various ways that their orientation is immediately relevant (or becomes relevant) to the course material, most often in courses on gender and performance. Butler's (1990) conception of gender as a repetition of stylized acts has since been applied to the categories of racial and sexual behavior and participants reported using it to teach

those concepts in their own courses. In contrast to the experiences of SB and DC above, where student resistance was made up of denial, disavowal, and diminished credibility, TF and AP reported student resistance that was much more confrontational.

TF, a trans-identified White female, shared her experience of coming up against the devout Protestant Christianity of her students and their multiple acts of resistance to her embodiment and sexuality. As mentioned earlier, TF is the only faculty member in her department who is doing critical work "from an embodiment that students find threatening," and she explained how their fundamental spiritual beliefs clash with the social justice agenda in her courses.

> TF: This is being in an environment where many students believe I'm condemned and do whatever they can to avoid me… they can't hear what I say without compromising their relationship with God.

In her time at this private liberal arts institution, TF explained that she has had students openly attempt to proselytize her in the classroom and express their concern that she would literally burn in hell. TF also recalled a particular group of White male students from the dominant religious group who "followed her around for several semesters" taking each of her classes, even the ones cross-listed with gender studies, while in pursuit of their missionary agenda. Notably, TF explained how she could feel the tension begin to rise up in her body as she was telling me this tale and how it has impacted the way she teaches from her social justice perspective at this institution. In her terms, the content of her courses has not changed, but the titles of her classes no longer contain the term "social justice" and she does a lot more of what she calls "back-door pushing" instead of leading with the terms she

knows this group of students will react against.

Another confrontational form of resistance that 1 of the participants experienced came from a "very, very, very straight, White male" who used his performance assignment to act out his resistance to AP, the gay, Black male instructor.

> AP: There are subtle ways in which students will perform resistance, they perform a kind of lashing in the classroom. So, I identify as a gay man and I'm a Black man, so this student chose that particular [performance text] both as a sense of being the identified "Other" for the assignment, but also as a critique of me… And I read a personal critique of me as he was critiquing the Black, gay character within the text… And as we went through that entire process, in some cases contentious exchanges between the two of us where he was reducing the character in the piece to just some Black fag, you know, and somehow that was linked with intelligence; that was linked with issues of social propriety; it was linked with class. There was a whole series of things that were just reductive.

AP offered this example of confrontational resistance in a larger conversation about engaging students with difference as part of the social justice agenda in his courses. He clarified that he provided it as an example of how to engage students who initially might seem to be a solidly polarized "Other." The bulk of AP's narrative here related how he worked with this student over the course of the semester to complicate and thicken his performance such that it was more critical, reflective, nuanced, and appropriate than it had started out. This example provides a common theme for the rest of the participants who discussed student resistance in that they all acknowledged the inevitability of resistance and their commitment to engage it as part of social justice pedagogy.

Summarizing This "Way of Being"

By emphasizing reflexivity, the interrogation of the self, and foregrounding their positionality, these educators talk about their work as a way of being in the world that puts bodies on the line and has personal and political consequences. They expressed in multiple ways how the work that they do is not required of them to meet the professional requirements of their job, but is rather something they feel compelled, or even called, to do with their life and work, even when they encounter blatant resistance from their students. Each participant expressed their understanding that the work they have chosen to do is "different," and "more than" what the majority of their colleagues do, but that their work is an outgrowth of their lives and experiences. DC referred to the communal values of Black culture to explain how his investment in social justice work was about making the world better for people who come after him. He continued by explaining how the pull of those values made him work to get promoted to full professor (while many of his peers are content to stay at the associate level) and his subsequent move into administration where he can make "real change" within the university. For the participants in this study, social justice scholarship and pedagogy, as a way of being, are grounded in their experiences and commitments to promoting a more equitable social world. This includes taking student resistance in stride as another part of the job and continuing to engage the topics in the face of denial, dismissal, and confrontation. They explained thinking about their work as a calling and a compulsion to use their knowledge and resources to stimulate change through their work as teachers, researchers, and activists. To which CW added by citing bell

hooks' sentiment that you are either resisting the status quo or you are supporting it, and she is emphatically resisting it by engaging in social justice pedagogy. Their understanding of their work as a way of being, shared through their narratives and experiences, leads directly into their conceptions of pedagogy and their description of it as a "process." The next section explores how participants conceive of their work as a process that is grounded in their way of being in the world as social justice educators.

"A Process"

"Part of our job is about planting seeds and we are rarely around for the harvest."
~R. M.

"This kind of work is like a savings account. You're not going to see returns on it until later."
~T. F.

*"That's the coolest part of the whole project is that they all go off into the world and you never know when it's gonna come, but it **is** gonna come. The e-mail from a student who became a lawyer in Boston or the e-mail from the student who became a social worker in Phoenix… I mean, when their lives blossom, they look back and they want to thank you for being part of the catalyst."*
~W. H.

As indicated by the quotes from participants at the opening of this section, each educator has a unique way of referring to the *process* of teaching for social justice, but the common theme amongst them is the long-term, compounding nature of their work as educators. The entire educational system relies on repetition and accretion as students traverse each grade level so that they have seen, heard, practiced, and applied concepts at multiple points in their education from start to finish. Thus, the process of teaching for social justice also requires time, growth,

exposure, and self-reflection for that material to germinate.

To begin, the most obvious allusion to the process is how they describe this work as long-term. As RM notes, the work of doing social justice pedagogy is about "planting seeds" that will hopefully take root such that there will be a "harvest" at some point in the future, even if the instructor is not around to see it. Additionally, as TF explains, "this kind of work is like a savings account" but one that will not begin "paying returns" until later, likely after students have gone through your class and perhaps even after graduation or several years post college. The strongest indication offered that these educators view their work as a process is that they know they will not likely see significant changes during the semester or quarter that they are with students in the classroom. WH stated it most aptly when he said that, "you never know when it's gonna come, but it *is* gonna come" when a former student reaches out to you to share their life experiences and how they have used what they learned from your class.

That pedagogy is part of a larger process of education is not new, but rather, the pedagogical process of educating for social justice is a newer approach; one that foregrounds hope and possibilities for different ways of interacting together. McLaren (2003) explained how critical pedagogy addresses this approach by stating, "teaching and learning should be a process of inquiry, of critique; it should also be a process of constructing, of building a social imagination that works within a language of hope" (p. 92). The larger project of critique originally articulated by Freire (1970) was in service of a dialectic between naming the problems of a traditional pedagogy and imagining otherwise, a pedagogy of hope for a changed

and more equitable future. Both theorists acknowledge the processual nature of pedagogical practice and indicate that in critical pedagogy this process requires careful attention to structures and practices in society to illuminate the systems of inequality prevalent in sociocultural contexts so that they can be examined and dismantled.

A social justice pedagogy that utilizes a critical perspective is also a process, one that participants described engaging in while teaching their respective courses. In their descriptions of how each participant understands this process I have identified several distinct conceptions of "process" that they use to describe their work. The first is an overarching meta-description of the process as a journey rather than a destination, and subsequent descriptions outlining process as critical transformation and process as identifying points of departure.

"Process" as a Journey, Not a Destination

Lee Anne Bell (1997) articulated that social justice is both a process and a goal, indicating the ongoing tension between the current sociopolitical structure of power and the possibility for other, more just and equitable structures. In her terms, "the goal of social justice education is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs," and, "social justice involves social actors who have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward and with others and the society as a whole" (p. 3). Here, she specifically acknowledges the relationship between agency and action, indicating that a part of the process of social justice pedagogy is to instill that agency

in students for use in reshaping social structures to become more equitable. Her emphasis on the process of social justice education in relationship to the broader goal of a just society is particularly relevant to the practices of these 8 social justice educators in communication.

Grounded in the liberal arts tradition, communication teaching and research has long been concerned with the use of messages in a society. Rhetoricians have emphasized speechmaking and other acts of public communication as constitutive since ancient times and examined rhetorical texts for the ways that they enact a public pedagogy (Hartnett, 2010). The rhetorical tradition spans pedagogy and public communication from the educational models and preparation that young boys of the ruling class received as training for active citizenship in Athenian democracy up through the present. Traces of that mission linger in contemporary liberal arts curriculum at institutions of higher education in the United States, and are often visible in communication departments (Galanes, 2009). The link between communication and citizenship was cited by all 8 participants in their descriptions of how communication content teaches agency and active engagement, of the sort needed to maintain a democratic state. In this way, the participants quoted our discipline's rhetorical tradition as the foundation for the process and goal of social justice education in their communication courses.

BM teaches at a public university in the South that has an undergraduate and a master's program, so she is able to work with students at both levels. She explained how she engages in teaching social justice at each level to hopefully produce "better citizens." Her perspective on teaching from a social justice stance

includes another cultivation metaphor, but also a strong foundation for why communication is the field that can do this kind of transformative work.

> BM: We are planting seeds and we are creating an orientation that we hope will germinate and will grow and will move forward in a healthy way.
>
> JM: What is it that makes our field useful for social justice, or particularly useful for social justice?
>
> BM: I think our rhetorical history. If you think about social movements, communication, verbal, nonverbal, the visual dimension of nonverbal signs as well, that's at the core of who we are, and so it makes us particularly well-suited for this because change doesn't occur without some type of communication and we *are* communication, so that situates us to be at the forefront.

Here, the process orientation of the growth metaphor as well as the link to our field as one that studies and influences social movements—another kind of process—grounds BM's understanding of how and why she engages in pedagogy for social justice. Her description also shows how the metanarrative of the journey, and not simply the destination, are part and parcel of how she goes about her work. By indicating that the planting of seeds is done in the hope that they will germinate into something that will "move forward in a healthy way" she acknowledges that this is neither a straightforward, nor wholly predictable process, but one that relies on hope—hope for a better future, a more just and equitable future "implemented within a community of caring generous believers in freedom and justice, and love for all—all the time" (Fassett and Warren, 2007, p. 128).

One of the key components of the process as journey analogy is invoking students' agency, as thinkers and actors in the social world they inhabit. As Bell's (1997) earlier conception noted, students who have been taught with a social justice orientation should have a sense of their own agency and a commitment to

improving their social world. Within the context of a liberal arts education in the communication discipline, another participant explained that teaching agency is his only goal.

> WH: It's all about teaching agency.
>
> JM: You mentioned that a lot in your article, agency and having the ability to articulate themselves clearly and using good argument structure.
>
> WH: I think that's the key to the whole ballgame. That's why we teach public speaking, right?
>
> JM: Right.
>
> WH: That's why we care about how they write their essays. I mean, for me, that's our relevant place as teachers is to teach the skills of agency.
>
> JM: Gotcha. So what is it that's unique about communication that enables or helps us to do the project of social justice?
>
> WH: Oh, that's a great question. I think that goes back to what the core of each discipline is. So, the teaching of English is by definition an individual act of reading a book in private.
>
> JM: Right.
>
> WH: So, the goal of English is to make you a better reader. The goal of engineering, the way our economy is set up, is to make you a better worker in the weapons system. And the goal of business teaching is to make you a better tool in the world of capitalism. The goal of law school is to make you a cog in the wheel of an unjust legal system. And, so, communication is one of the only disciplines that says, our goal is to change the public.

Emphasizing the public orientation of the discipline as well as the outcome of teaching the skills of agency is how this participant understands his own process of teaching for social justice. The placement of agency at the forefront of a critical approach to teaching material in communication fits squarely within the realm of a critical pedagogy approach as well. McLaren (2003) advocates that, "schools must become sites for the production of both critical knowledge and sociopolitical action.

Any institution worthy of the appellation 'school' must educate students to become active agents for social transformation and critical citizenship" (p. 178). Thus the participants in this study see their placement in the discipline and their role as teachers linked with the goals of social justice as both a process and a goal and one that they described through their narratives of teaching practice. Active citizenship requires agency, something that the communication discipline, with its roots in the rhetorical tradition can provide. This process, as a journey of growth, rests on the premise that learning the skills of agency and becoming a critical thinker capable of active citizenship takes time, and requires incubation if it is to bear fruit at some later date.

Commitment to this journey is evident in participants' descriptions of their classroom practices as ones where they are asking students to "try on" their agency in different ways. To prepare students for their roles in a complex sociocultural and political environment where their knowledge of social justice issues and their critical perspective will be tested, social justice educators in this study reported using several different assignments and activities to give students space to rehearse their agency. AP teaches at a public university on the West Coast and explained his view that any (and all) classes can be taught from a social justice perspective from within the frameworks of each discipline and through the content material to be covered. AP explained that whether he is teaching the basic oral interpretation course or the advanced courses in performance, he approaches them in the same way through his understanding and use of performance pedagogy for social justice.

> AP: It's creative opportunity, creative, critical, strategic opportunities devised by an instructor to provide students with an embodied experience of theoretical, ideological material.
>
> JM: Okay.
>
> AP: So, it's about making… It's not about just the critical part of thinking about theory or about principle or about ways of seeing the world, but it's about putting it in your body, trying it on, actually doing. So, it's learning by doing… It's about knowing through critical engagement.

Here, AP explained that the learning process associated with the material, whether it is specifically performance studies, or the basic courses in oral interpretation and public speaking can be augmented by asking students to "try on" different behaviors within that space. The embodied nature of a performance project within the classroom also comes into play in classes taught by other participants who have students perform service learning for their social justice courses. When the students are asked to put their bodies into a new space, to engage with others through the medium of that space, and develop a more nuanced understanding of the issues, themselves, and the communities impacted, then they are enacting their agency, they are trying on different ways of being. These trials are a component of helping them to think into the issues covered by the class through their own experience of being there, or working with, or acting out, aspects of the daily struggles of people from different social groups.

Training students in the skills of agency as part of the process of teaching for social justice makes use of classroom spaces as spheres of influence where critical engagement with issues can be practiced, rehearsed, acted out, and prepared for the social world both within and beyond the classroom. Classroom spaces are a part of the real world (despite students oft repeated refrains that "in the real world" things

are different), they are places where great injury and damage can take place (hooks, 1994), thus they are also places where the work of training citizens to act otherwise can be rehearsed. As Fassett and Warren (2007) explain,

> If the classroom is a microcosm of worlds, a metonym of the cultures we'll encounter throughout our lives, then it is also a site of social change. It is a meaningful environment for engaging difference, for creating community, and for envisioning the kinds of social organization we want for ourselves. We don't forget the ideological lessons we learn in school, and if we presume that, in the classroom, we cannot build a more just society, then we have already abdicated our agency; we have lost ourselves to a series of false worlds by never knowing how to make them real. (p. 63)

Using the classroom space to act into and try on different perspectives is how students are prepared to take their new knowledge outside of the classroom and implement it in ways that impact their daily lives and experiences. Wink (2005) explained that, "the purpose of transformative education is to create processes whereby students can see that their actions do count. Students are encouraged to take the learning from the classroom and to engage locally and socially" (p. 147).

WH, along with the rest of the participants, understands his job to teach and conduct research within a university setting, but the way he views that teaching is processual, as working towards a larger goal, as preparing students for active citizenship outside of the classroom.

> JM: Would you say that you try and incorporate a social justice perspective into every class you teach?
>
> WH: Oh, definitely. But, with that term spun in a very broad way. It's all about citizenship training.

Here, WH clearly indicates the process of training students to be active citizens in a democratic society that has been foundational to the liberal arts perspective on teaching since the Trivium (see McLuhan, 2006; Sister Miriam Joseph, 2002). The

process, or journey, of turning out citizens is deeply embedded in pedagogical practice, however, the critical perspective constructs citizenship training with an eye towards relations of power operating within a society to produce more critical citizens—capable of critique as well as imagination for what is possible, but not yet realized (Freire, 1970). The theoretical framework of critical pedagogy offers the most substantive explanation for how social justice educators are using classroom spaces as liberatory, transformative locations. I use it here to help explain how participants in this study have defined their process as a journey rather than a specific destination. Indeed, Fassett and Warren (2007) elaborate that, "critical educators appraise education for pain, for inequity, and seek to act accordingly, which is to say *with* each other, not *on*, *for*, or *to* each other. Quite simply, critical pedagogy is a journey, not a destination" (p. 26).

The journey plays out over time as social justice educators teach their classes, form relationships with their students, and those students go on in their academic careers to other classes. It is usually not until much later that these instructors find out how the material has impacted the growth of their students, but that waiting period does not deter them from engaging in the work. For example, in speaking about her process teaching from a social justice perspective, SB explained that she will become Facebook friends with her students only after they have completed her course, and she has had multiple interactions with former students through that medium as they send links, post articles, or share stories from their lives that relate to the material from her class.

> SB: I'm still in contact with a lot of my students and they'll email me and say, "Hey, you know what? Even though it's been a year, I'm thinking about this…"

> They'll post articles that they've found online that they think might be of interest to me or they'll just email me and say, "You know what? I was thinking about you when I saw this thing on television about race, or something happened and I thought about you." So, that encourages me. It let's me know that I am walking in my destiny, so to speak. I am where I'm supposed to be.

This anecdotal evidence suggests to SB that she "must be doing something right" to have students keep in touch with her and recommend her class to others. In her words, the journey is what she feels "called to do" and that has impacted her process of teaching for social justice.

The journey is also something that these educators see as part of their job, as playing out over time as they move through their careers, grow, change, mature, take new positions, and continue the work of researching and teaching for social justice. When they were asked to recall when they started teaching with an explicitly social justice perspective, they clearly stated that they always had the inclination, but that the actual practice of it has definitely changed over time, further indicating their personal journey as they developed their particular social justice perspectives.

Participants indicated their commitment to doing the work of social justice pedagogy in numerous ways throughout explanations of their approach and, in each telling, they revealed the developmental nature of their thought processes and actions. When responding to questions about how they initially instituted a social justice perspective into their teaching, all participants indicated that the impulse, the desire to teach differently than they had been taught, was there from the beginning, but that the specific manner in which that desire manifested itself was something that took time to create and refine. In describing their growth from the

beginning of their careers to the present, each offered insights into how much they have changed and how change has been a constant component of their pedagogy from their time teaching as graduate students till now. In recalling their own developmental process to become social justice educators, participants revealed how the process of learning to teach and improving their teaching is also about the journey more than the destination.

DC started his teaching career at a very young age (he began teaching as a doctoral student when he was just 19-years old) and as a result experienced numerous credibility issues in his teaching.

> DC: People were just kind of looking at me like, "what is going on?" Are you the teacher? Are you a student? Are you playing?
>
> JM: So what did you do? How did you manage that?
>
> DC: The advantage I had was that I was at a predominantly Black university, and Black cultural values are such that you always respect the person in the position of authority…so, when you get a person in the classroom who's an instructor, you just assume that the rules still apply.

In this new learning space, DC was able to begin the journey of articulating his teaching persona. He explained that once students got used to the idea of him, in his young body, being their teacher, that they soon gravitated to him for conversations outside of class and he found himself in the role of mentor to these students as someone closer to their age group but with more knowledge and experience. From this institution, he moved to a predominantly White institution where his age and racial category were viewed much more negatively and he was forced to revise his approach to teaching about issues of race and culture.

> JM: What do you think was the most negative component, the youth or the racial identity?

> DC: Well, the racial, definitely. The racial and then it was exacerbated by the age thing. It was really very, very intense. [….] So, it really changed things. They were saying, "OK, you're halfway qualified because you are from a different culture and you can teach that culture and you can teach about race issues, but I don't necessarily want to hear it from *you*."
>
> JM: So how did you respond to that in terms of your teaching?
>
> DC: That's where I learned to have fun. Because I learned that there's no way to get this across unless I really started having fun with them and letting them know that this is not really about you, that there's other stuff going on. What I started doing was using simulations and games in class to get across the message and therefore it took the focus off of them and me and put it on let's just have fun and then we can get back to learning about the issues simply through the messages within the game. And that strategy was pretty useful. I think people were able to, you know, kind of get to a point where they weren't as nervous about issues of race, where they could talk about it in a way that was very helpful for them. Umm, it really, really changed the way that I thought about pedagogy.

Not only did it change how DC thought about pedagogy but also how he engaged in it when teaching students from dominant populations from his Black male body. He explained further that he has continued to use games and simulations to teach issues of race and culture and modifies his use of them with each iteration to highlight the important components of the topic, whether it be whiteness in the media or intercultural communication.

Fassett and Warren (2007) articulated a critical communication pedagogy, critical pedagogy grounded squarely in the communication discipline, in order to locate the places where communicative interaction can be examined for the nuances of power that it makes possible. "Central to critical communication pedagogy is its commitment to pedagogy as praxis, to teachers and students working together to locate and name the taken-for-granted in pedagogical contexts, to de-center normative readings of a given phenomenon, experience, or idea" (Fassett & Warren,

2007, p. 51). DC's narrative of process, the journey that took him through teaching in a historically Black college and university (HBCU) to a predominantly White institution, indicates the level of growth and change he underwent on his journey from a beginning teacher to where he is now as a full professor. His commitment to praxis, reflection and action together, made possible the incorporation of different teaching materials to advance the goals he had for the course, to redirect the students' attention from his particular body to the content material about racial bodies so that they could engage it together from a different perspective. This shift makes dialogue—the process of conversing about ideas to construct knowledge (Freire, 1970)—with students more likely as they are engaged with each other (and the teacher) to make sense of the concepts being introduced through the game.

Critical pedagogy is a process and one that continues to evolve (Wink, 2005) as educators reflect on their process and revise their practices. Freire (1978) was quite clear that his methods could not simply be adopted wholesale or dropped into a new location and be effective. Rather, critical teachers needed to engage in praxis, in reflection and action, to develop a critical pedagogy applicable to the context in which they were teaching. This pedagogy is not a product; it is a process of development (Wink, 2005), and social justice educators in this study recounted how their own process of development has been a journey undertaken over the length of their teaching careers to get them to the place they are now.

The destination of social justice, by pessimistic accounts, is all but unobtainable given the starting points in contemporary society with the prevalence of injustice across areas of difference rampant in U.S. culture, not to mention

worldwide. Into this breach, social justice educators have stepped to enact a pedagogy in process, of process, that is a journey towards this (perhaps) mythical destination. Using a critical pedagogy framework to understand their strategic choices illuminates how they view their pedagogy as a journey rather than a destination and how their descriptions of this journey indicate the processual nature of the project of social justice in their classes. Additionally, understanding the grounding of their pedagogical approach in the rhetorical tradition of the discipline indicates how they view social justice as an integral component of the liberal arts tradition in the communication discipline. The following section explores another conception of the process as one of transformation.

"Process" as Critical Transformation

The second broad conceptualization of process apparent in participants' descriptions focused on the process as transformative, which they defined as changing student's perspectives on the course content, communication concepts, and related social issues. Four of the 8 participants teach classes that have a community engagement component requiring students to apply course concepts in a setting outside of the university to place their knowledge into action for a particular purpose. These community action projects ask students to spend a significant amount of time exploring an organization related to the topic of the course so that they can offer their services as a volunteer, provide consulting services regarding communication concepts and skills, plan or host an event related to the mission of the organization, etc. These projects are applied communication as

students put into practice the content material they are learning in their classes and the social justice educators leading those classes reported designing these assignments for transformative purposes.

Wink (2005) explained that the "transformative model of education is another name for critical pedagogy" where the ultimate goal of utilizing a critical framework for educational practice was the transformation of social structures in the lives of students and teachers (p. 79). In sum,

> The fundamental belief that drives classroom behaviors is that we must act; we must relate our teaching and learning to real life; we must connect our teaching and learning with our communities; and we must always try to learn and teach so that we grow and so that students' lives are improved, or so self- and social transformation occurs. (Wink, 2005, p. 79)

The process of transformation described here utilizes many of the formative components of critical pedagogy including the connection between the lives of the students and the material, critical examination of knowledge (where it comes from and how it is produced), as well as the concept of praxis—reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it (Freire, 1970). Additionally, Kincheloe (2005) stated that a transformative critical pedagogy "is not only interested in social change but also in cultivating the intellect of teachers, students, and members of the larger society" (p. 21). Thus, the concept of transformation implies broad scale changes in thought, in social structures, the way those structures are understood, critiqued and re-imagined, and the process of making these changes through a critical pedagogical perspective.

TF requires her students to complete a community action project in a course titled *Communication, Culture, and Social Justice*. In her experience, the students at

her private liberal arts college have acquired a vocabulary of the terms in the social justice vernacular but have not been pushed to explore what those terms mean in their own lives and thus have a static understanding of how they play out on actual bodies in the world. Her project requires them to develop a complex perspective of the issues surrounding the community agency and its mission so that they can apply a critical perspective to it and offer research and suggestions to address the situation. TF also explained that her institution is a Methodist university in the South and, because of the influence of the religious ideology embedded in the mission of the school, her students often conflate social justice with philanthropy. Therefore, her method of introducing social justice material at this institution requires that they spend time discussing why philanthropic organizations are necessary to get at the root problems of social injustice that exist in their region and society. This step is crucial to her students so that they learn to unpack the vocabulary around both topics (philanthropy and social justice) to understand the differences before they can proceed with their community-based projects. In this environment, she also works with an interdisciplinary student cohort on long-term projects that include a civic learning component and has found that her teaching in that setting is even more reliant on incorporating a critical approach into the conversation if the effect is to be truly transformative.

> TF: It's a great deal of energy and effort just to put on the brakes and say, "Look, you need to understand these issues, you need to read this text, we need to have these conversations." That, in itself, is a critical aspect of *doing something*. Because, you know, the students' impulse is to [raise money]. As the process evolved, I ended up putting the brakes on it and said, "You can do these projects out in the world, but they cannot deal with *just* raising money." And, I make them go and work with organizations in the community.

In addressing the structural issues of power within the specific areas important to her students, TF felt it was necessary to interrupt their philanthropic tendencies to make sure that they were more informed about the root causes of the issues prior to deciding on, and engaging in, civic activity. Here, she used her role as the facilitator to guide their development process through the relevant literature and in-class discussions to a deeper understanding of the issues, specifically how they were impacted by power and oppression, which ultimately helped frame their final projects.

From a critical pedagogy perspective, the move to action within the community should involve naming the problem, reflecting critically upon it, and acting in some way to transform it (Wink, 2005). As McLaren (2003) makes clear,

> Knowledge is relevant only when it begins with the experiences students bring with them from the surrounding culture, it is critical only when these experiences are shown to be sometimes problematic (i.e., racist, sexist); and it is transformative only when students begin to use the knowledge to help empower others, including individuals in the surrounding community. (p. 92)

Thus, TF's move to reign in her students desire to engage in fundraising in favor of critically examining the larger issues that led to the need for the organization to exist in the first place was in alignment with a critical pedagogy informed approach for transformative action.

In the process of transformation, social justice educators reported teaching students to question taken for granted ways of knowing, especially those that they have been taught up to this point in their educational career. Critical examination of the socially constructed nature of knowledge is an integral component of teaching for transformation. McLaren (2003) stated it thus,

> When critical theorists claim that knowledge is socially constructed, they mean that it is the product of agreement or consent between individuals who live out particular social relations (e.g., of class, race, and gender) and who live in particular junctures in time. To claim that knowledge is socially constructed usually means that the world we live in is constructed symbolically by the mind through social interaction with others and is heavily dependent on culture, context, custom, and historical specificity. There is no ideal, autonomous, pristine, or aboriginal world to which our social constructions necessarily correspond; there is always a referential field (e.g., language, culture, place, time) in which symbols are situated. (p. 72)

The knowledge that students come into the classroom with is inherently socially constructed, but they are largely unaware of these constructions having been taught that this is simply the way things are. Bringing a critical lens to knowledge and showing how it is always in relationship to power as well as showing that it is created and shaped through communication sets up the social justice project where changing the language and the knowledge can result in a changed world. Freire (1970) argued that changing language is part of the process of changing the world, hence critical pedagogy attends to language and the subsequent constructions produced through language that establish certain structures over others. When social justice educators teach their communication courses, they are particularly mindful of language and the ways it is used to produce knowledge, and the normalized, taken-for-granted knowledge structures that students come in with. This attention comes through in the subject matter for the course, the assignments within the course, or the general format for interaction with the material in the course.

For example, TF and RM both recounted how they have been called "political" because they introduce a critical viewpoint for assessing and

understanding material while other ideological positions from "traditional," or "standard" courses have not. In both of their classrooms, a discussion of what it means to be called "political" and what it means to be "regular" is an important starting point in the conversation about social justice. The excavation of the "normal" perspective is what provides learners with a space to understand how they have come to know what they know and the inherently constructed nature of that information (Burr, 2003).

> RM: I teach in a predominantly conservative environment and the fact is, conservatives become very uneasy when their presuppositions are questioned. I'll give you a simple example. My brand of critical pedagogy (which stems from the work of Peter McLaren, Henry Giroux, Barry Kanpol, etc.) believes many features of capitalism are antithetical to the creation of an authentic democratic society. As such, I simply question capitalism at tactical moments in my teaching. This simple practice ruffles the feathers of many students who conflate capitalism with "America." They complain (to me, my chair, the dean, etc.) that I am being un-American by simply questioning capitalism. My answer to them is that no one complains when the business professors in the business school (which is the church of capitalist indoctrination) essentially preach the religion of capitalism. In other words, if you re-inscribe the dominant system in your teaching, it is so normalized, that no one even thinks about it. But if you question the dominant system, you are an evil liberal trying to indoctrinate your students.

Calling attention to the underlying ideologies and belief systems that produced the material being studied as knowledge in the first place is one way that social justice educators stimulate students to think about that material differently and expand their understanding of the viewpoints that produce knowledge, their inherent assumptions, and the ways that those can be questioned and/or changed to produce new knowledge. The aim of proceeding on this course is to help students see and understand that all knowledge has a support structure that is contextually bound and that is in the service of some ideological perspective or other. There is no such

thing as neutral information and social justice educators in this study explained that helping students to grasp that transformative concept was an important component of their work.

By foregrounding all of the different ways that knowledge can be produced, educators in this study were also explicitly drawing attention to what is "different" about a social justice approach to the topic and indicate how they see their pedagogical process as being transformative. McLaren (1997), following Giroux, advocates conceptualizing schools as democratic spaces that are "dedicated to self and social empowerment, where students have the opportunity to learn the knowledge and skills necessary to live in an authentic democracy" (p. 84). In this view, schools as democratic public spheres "function to dignify meaningful dialogue and action and to give students the opportunity to learn the language of responsibility. Such a language seeks to recapture the idea of democracy as a social movement grounded in a fundamental respect for individual freedom and social justice" (McLaren, 1994, p. 237). Following these appeals to both self and social engagement, participants reported that communal engagement with topics, communities, bodies, issues, etc. is a vital part of this transformational process and can assist students to move from seeing unreflectively to being more critical thinkers (Finlay & Faith, 1987). As stated previously, 4 of the 8 participants teach courses that require students to complete work outside of the classroom with community service agencies and 2 more require students to interact with racial and cultural others through assignments for their courses. Wildman (2000) explained that getting to know someone from a different group is still one of the best ways to begin breaking down barriers of difference. Whether it is through working with a community service agency or attending

a cultural event hosted by a group that students are not part of, the participants in this study actively encourage getting to know people from different groups as part of the transformative learning experience. In the process of coming to know others, there is a greater potential for compassion, empathy, and changes in belief structure about the "Other" (Wildman, 2000).

For example, in his performance studies course, AP asks students to compose two separate performances throughout the semester—a performance of self and a performance of "Other." According to AP, this personal form of interaction with individual life histories can provide the kind of communal engagement that stimulates nuanced thinking and critical examination about social justice topics through examination of the life experiences of another. This process requires depth and sensitivity to avoid simply surface engagement, and is one where he finds that the change in thinking can be dramatic. In the performance of self, students represent themselves the way that they (think) they are seen and heard by others. During the performance of "Other," they are asked to choose a found text from someone they perceive is their "Other" to perform. The juxtaposition of these performances is what helps students understand how performance is an important way of knowing and communicating in society. Indeed, Fassett and Warren (2007) explain how examination of rituals and performances helps us to see patterns in communicative interaction and "to understand how we function collaboratively to produce our social reality and render it meaningful" (p. 45). Furthermore, AP reported that it is the students' engagement with this "Other" that provides the grounding for discussion between the instructor and students about difference and

what it means in each of those bodies. Through reflective writing assignments, they share what they are coming to know about themselves and their "Other" and AP is able to ask further questions and stimulate deeper inquiry into their analyses and preparations.

AP explained that these interpretive performances are a place to show how differences are perceived, what kinds of differences exist between and among unique populations, and how there are many ways that we focus on difference rather than seeing what is similar about others and their lives when compared with our own. He explained that this aids them in gaining a more complex understanding of how identities are imbricated with power and how bodies bear the weight of all the different assumptions attached to certain components of identity. Fassett and Warren (2007) state it thus, "the body, where identity meets the politics, the assumptions, the policing of the other, remains the site of power's enactment, where disciplinary mechanisms play out in our flesh, our hearts, our minds" (p. 59). Hence, AP feels that the process of developing their final performances is where the opportunity for transformation is most likely. In addition, the learning goal of transforming the students' perception of the "Other" from someone that is completely alien and incomprehensible to someone that is warm, and human, and suffering from various indignities based on their social location in a hierarchical social setting is one that aligns with a critical approach to education. "Critical pedagogy… needs to be made less in-formative and more per-formative, less a pedagogy directed toward the interrogation of written texts than a corporeal pedagogy grounded in the lived experiences of the students" (McLaren, 2003, p.

170). In AP's words, the goal is to enact a "pedagogy that continues long after the performance" and is representative of how he thinks about the transformative potential of critical pedagogy.

As this extended example illustrates, what counts as knowledge can come through the embodiment of an "Other" as opposed to only separate, static explorations of cultural difference. Emphasizing the many ways that knowledge can be produced is one of the major tactics that social justice educators in this study reported using to stimulate transformative thinking in their students. For these educators, the process as transformation occurs when students come to see, understand, and articulate course material from within a critical framework. Their examples indicate how participants understand student movement from a place of unreflective existence within a system they perceived to be fixed to thinking in ways that now question their previous assumptions about how the world works and their place within it. For these instructors, this movement and the transformation they claim to see happening is a direct result of highlighting what makes their classes critical. By expressly indicating their social justice approach to teaching, educators in this study identified their stance as a way of being and indicated another conceptualization of process operating in their pedagogy—identifying points of departure.

"Process" as Identifying Points of Departure

In addition to describing process as a journey and as transformation, these educators discussed thinking about their pedagogy as a process of identifying

important points of departure. These points of departure were described as places where their pedagogical approach diverges from a "traditional" pedagogy; where critical educators differ from their peers; where the students are coming from, their individual points of departure—to address all the gaps and spaces in the meta-narrative of schooling and society that invite critical examination. Participants identified these points in their narratives when describing how they approach teaching from a social justice perspective, how they navigate departmental and classroom climates where they are the only critical educator, how they plan and prepare content for a diverse student body, and how all of these points locate their course content in relationship to the status quo.

Social justice educators in this study have found that it is important to be forthright about their approach so that the students are made aware of what they will be getting in these courses, with them as an instructor. TF explained that her approach is to be "out with it" and upfront with students about the social justice perspective and what they will be doing with it in the class. In her experience, she has found that students do not really understand it at first and that she spends a lot of time unpacking the epistemological, ontological and axiological components of a critical perspective. While the initial shock of being confronted with a new way of thinking is overwhelming, TF explained that going through this process at the beginning and including her commitments on the syllabus establishes a framework for the critical analysis that the students will be asked to use for their own assignments in the class.

> TF: When I'm teaching a course that is explicitly social justice focused, we begin by talking about, laying the theoretical foundation for the perspective…

> So, I'm out with it and I talk about privilege and oppression and dominant ideologies and hegemony and all of that, and so the first several weeks in a social justice course that's foundational, we go over all of those concepts and what they mean in relationship to this and I spend a great deal of time talking about it as a theoretical perspective. I talk about, "You might not like this perspective, but while you're in this class you have to recognize and address the perspective from inside, use your own language of it." Because otherwise it gets completely equated with a personal agenda, you know, the ramblings of just people who are angry. So, if I don't do the work, I have found that our conversations go in directions that are less productive.

This form of modeling has proven useful for her to lay the groundwork and differentiate the perspective students' get in her class as opposed to others in the department. She also feels strongly that the students need to be forewarned because if they do not want to be there, they need to know what it is going to be like so they can decide if they want to stay.

Similarly, BM takes the stance that students need to know what perspective the information is coming from (hers), and why (because of her gendered, racialized experience of the world) so that they know what they are getting. She is also quick to emphasize that they do not have to agree with it or change their behavior, but they do have to "sit with it" for the semester and engage the readings and assignments through it so that by the end of their time together, "they can't say they didn't know" about this way of viewing the world.

> BM: I set up my classes so the student understands right from the very beginning that everyone in the class is getting the perspective of the instructor. And I have a particular end point. I have a particular view on the world. And I spend a lot of time talking to them about how I would be remiss if I didn't introduce certain things to them. [….] So, it isn't necessarily that everyone who walks out of the door will have this experience or that they will have done this thing, but they can't say that they didn't know. And, that's my piece. They can't say that they didn't know and there's a possibility that they will continue to tell others.

Here, BM indicates her transparency with students about the perspective she uses to teach her classes and why. She explained feeling strongly that students need to know what they are getting into and while they may take her classes and get the core content, they may still walk away unchanged by the experience. She keeps faith by reminding herself that the students had to think about it for 16-weeks, they had to operate within the perspective and provide comments for class discussion using it for that time, and that it may become more meaningful to them at some later date. BM is hopeful that the material from the course and her embodied presence as a Black female professor teaching it will linger with students and resurface when it becomes relevant to their lives.

A second, related, point of departure that participants identified in their narratives was about being the only person in their department teaching from a critically informed perspective and the tensions that creates in the process. Of the 8 participants, 5 reported being in this position—all 4 women and 1 of the men. As discussed above, social justice educators are approaching their classes from a different perspective than the "normal" or "traditional" pedagogical stance and the students recognize it. One participant shared a story about how the students in his department went so far as to organize a public debate between himself ("the lone critical guy"), and the resident postpositivist among the faculty and then billed it like the grudge match of the century. The majority of participants have not had convivial exchanges within their departments and 5 of the 8 respondents shared stories of overt student resistance or conflict with peers around the use of a critical perspective in their classes.

In the larger process of teaching from a social justice orientation, identifying points of departure—jumping off points—is a necessary precursor to embarking on the journey. In their narratives about being the only critical teacher in their department, participants explained that their view of education is for a wholly different purpose than that propagated by a traditional pedagogy. Whereas a traditional approach to schooling is concerned with maintenance or reproduction of the status quo (Bourdieu, 1973; Bowles & Gintis, 1976), a critical approach to schooling is focused on change and transformation of the status quo towards more equitable structures (Freire, 1970). CW explained that critical educators are up to a whole different project than traditional educators who feel that the scope of their professional responsibility is to deliver content and she wants to make that clear to her colleagues and her students.

> CW: Some people argue very strongly against the notion that a teacher should do anything in terms of encouraging students to think about how they're engaging those concepts. For some faculty the scope of our job, professional responsibility, is to deliver content. It's not about how students will use that content, and I think you cannot separate the delivery from the usage. Students will use what they get. They are using it. It's not even in the future. They're using it every day.
>
> JM: They use it as they get it?
>
> CW: Yeah, right now. As they go. So, for me then, the question is not primarily delivery of content but it's about how we're bringing together the practice and the knowing. So, how does what we know influence what we do? So, I think when we ask why certain faculty don't do this, well, they really don't see it as their job. It's a different perspective of the role and I do think there's some profound differences as to what *we're* up to and that informs our practice as faculty.

This point of departure is indicative of a separate view of the purpose of education and one that social justice educators explained making clear to their students when

they enter the classroom was important. All 3 of these educators acknowledged that students may not agree with the perspective, that they do not have to agree with it to succeed in the class, but that they had to make a good faith effort to operate from inside of it while completing their work for these classes. In the process of departing from the "norm," these instructors explain how they have embraced a view of education that is for transformation and change.

These critical educators also report thinking about their work as distinct from colleagues working in more traditional pedagogical paradigms. The key element of this difference, for these educators, was the focus on producing structural changes in social relations. A critical perspective of pedagogy represents a commitment to using education to produce structural changes in how we live together. Indeed, CW stated that her approach to pedagogy is about enhancing the public good and finding better ways to be in relationship with one another. Similarly, Giroux (2007) argued that a critical approach to pedagogy is designed to produce a more socially just world stating that,

> Pedagogy always represents a commitment to the future, and it remains the task of educators to make sure that the future points the way to a more socially just world, a world in which the discourses of critique and possibility in conjunction with the values of reason, freedom, and equality function to alter, as part of a broader democratic project, the grounds upon which life is lived. (p. 2)

Put this way, a critical perspective on the purpose of education is to make changes in the status quo rather than reproduce it, which is the goal of traditional educational perspectives (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Identifying this point of departure means pointing out that what students get in other, traditionally taught, classes is not the same thing that they are getting in the classes taught by social justice educators. It

is a clear fissure between paradigmatic orientations and one that they expressed is useful for students to understand in the larger process of educating from a social justice perspective. Students are being invited into a different way of seeing the world for a period of time and, in some cases, they find a language that speaks to their experience.

A key component of any critical pedagogical approach is finding out where the students are starting from to determine how much background information they need, what kind of pushing will be required, and how flexible they are to flipping the script on what they have been taught thus far. This point of departure requires that educators read their students and plan their material accordingly so that the process of working toward the goal of social justice can commence. Fassett and Warren (2007) explain that,

> Critical communication pedagogy is about engaging the classroom as a site of social influence, as a space where people shape each other for better and for worse; it is about respecting teachers and students and the possible actions they can take, however small, to effect material change to the people and the world around them (p. 8).

In the social justice educator's classroom space, where new concepts are introduced and agency is tried on, participants reported how important it was to find out where students are coming from in order to pitch their material effectively and have the biggest impact on material conditions.

For example, WH teaches classes in two separate contexts, at his university, and inside a women's correctional facility. He has had opportunities to teach from a social justice perspective in both contexts and reports that the students in each setting are not very different from one another. Yet, in order for him to be

respectful of their unique starting points, WH explained that you have to "meet them where they are" in order to stimulate students to think differently about topics in the social justice range. For him to "move his students down the line" as he phrases it, he needs to know where they are starting from and then he can determine what kind of content to include.

> WH: I mean, for me, all I think your job is as a teacher is to take any student where they are and move them down the line. And for every student that's going to be a different set of movements. So, for women in the prison, getting them to have the confidence to stand up and give a public speech is a stunning victory, and particularly if their speech is about a political topic, you know. You can teach them some life skill that also dovetails with social justice, and that's really a righteous thing for them. Whereas for some of the students on campus, you know, the kids who get straight A's and will go to law school, they need something different. So, for me, social justice pedagogy is not a monolithic thing. It's this thing where we assess each student's needs and hopes and skills and what can you do to help that student take the next step?

Assessing the starting points that each student comes in with allows the instructor to determine what moves need to be made, or scaffolding erected, to help students advance to the next level. As other practitioners have made clear from their own teaching, "good critical pedagogy dictates that I start where they are and teach them in ways that are culturally relevant to them" (Kincheloe, 2005). Relevance changes depending on where those students are, as in WH's case whether the students are on the inside or the outside, or whether they are part of dominant or oppressed groups in society.

Student identities and locations are an important component of critical pedagogy and the majority of literature has emphasized making content relevant with and for students who are part of traditionally marginalized groups (see Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994; Kincheloe, 2005; Wink, 2005). However, the student

populations that many of the social justice educators in this study teach are from fairly privileged groups. Participants reported that the students who attend their universities have a certain level of privilege and the majority are still mostly White and of higher socioeconomic status. Thus it becomes important not to diminish their starting points if critical educators hope to make transformation occur. Again, Fassett and Warren (2007) serve as our guide, explaining,

> Though it might be tempting to tell ourselves that certain students are naïve or confrontational or even deluded, we must work to listen to our students, to understand why they consider some topics inappropriate or irrelevant, so that we and our students might more fully understand each other. (p. 43)

Therefore, another component of discovering where students are and then pitching material appropriately includes assessing their level of awareness for social justice issues based on their experiences and social location. TF stated it plainly when she noted that, "I forget that what is patently obvious to me is often an absolute revelation" for the students. Here, she identifies an issue that all 8 participants in the study referenced when working with students from majority and dominant populations—they have not had to consider many of the issues covered in a social justice oriented class because it has not been their experience of the world. While this is not true for all of their students, each participant shared stories of classes where they had to address lack of knowledge and overt resistance to discussing oppression, marginality, racism, sexism, heterosexism, imperialism, hegemony, and domination (among others). DC vented his frustration that he has never been able to teach the class he wants to teach about race—"one where everyone comes to the table already with a sophisticated perception of the fact that racism, whiteness, and oppression are *real*."

As a result of his experiences and embodiment as a Black male, DC understands his role as "helping people get introduced to race and culture and want to learn about it more." His class on what film teaches us about race has the stated goal of helping students become more critical thinkers and consumers of mass mediated culture. In his words, "I want them to be able to take it apart and criticize it for having a pedagogy, an ideology, and 'seeing' what it is they are meant to take from it," so that they can be more critically conscious of those messages and their intended effect on the public.

Associated with this point of departure is the goal of helping students to develop a critical consciousness—what Freire (1970) labels conscientization. Becoming critically conscious is a vital first step in transformative educational processes with the intended goal of adapting behavior for egalitarian ends. McLaren (2003) states, "Students need to move beyond simply knowing about critical multiculturalist practice. They must also move toward an embodied and corporeal understanding of such practice and an affective investment in such practice at the level of everyday life" (p. 171). DC hopes that by interacting with him, "a Black man who is not blaming them for oppression," that he can help students "feel okay talking about race so that they are interested in taking other classes about culture" and increasing their knowledge and sensitivity towards these topics. His transformative goals for the examination of mass media depend on the starting points that the students come into the class with and how he frames the conversation to acknowledge those.

Identifying points of departure for the journey towards social justice is the last of three conceptions of process that social justice educators used to describe their pedagogy. Foregrounding the critical perspective in their teaching is offered in the spirit of full disclosure so that students know they are departing from the familiar path they have followed up to this point. Identifying what separates a critical perspective on pedagogy from a traditional one lays the foundation for the work in their courses and highlights what aspects differ between their courses and others that the students have taken (or are currently taking). Identifying the starting points within the students' experiences helps critical educators pitch their material to the right level for each student, whether they are from traditionally marginalized groups or, more common for these educators, from dominant and privileged groups.

Summarizing the "Process"

In general, social justice educators in this study described their approach using process-oriented language and metaphors. From planting seeds to savings accounts, they indicated that the process is long term and does not come to fruition until later. However, the time it takes to engage in the work and the lack of a guaranteed outcome does not dissuade them from engaging in it. They each explained that their particular take on this process is something that they have been, and continue to be, working on, revising, re-using, and refining throughout their careers. For none of them did this style of teaching spring forth as beginning instructors, even though they knew that they wanted to teach differently than they

had been taught, or that they saw issues *not* being discussed in classrooms that they thought *should* be discussed in classrooms. Each participant has over 15-years of teaching experience and indicated the long-term, developmental nature of their individual growth as social justice educators. They each explained how the process of developing their pedagogical approach was tied to their development as thinkers, teachers, and scholars and how it continues to grow and change as they mature, have new experiences, take on new positions, teach new courses, and work with new students. In fact, they each went so far as to say that teaching for social justice in their classes was more than a vocation but rather a way of being in the world.

Their conceptions of process included a view of it as a journey rather than a destination, a transformation—teaching students to view the world from a different (i.e., critical) perspective—as well as identifying points of departure—places where the critical perspective in their teaching diverged from a traditional one. Combined, the process of teaching from a social justice perspective incorporates all three components beginning with the view of this process as a journey rather than (or not simply as) a destination and traverses through the other two conceptions of transformation and points of departure. To round out the journey metaphor, these instructors need to understand where students are starting from, indicate that they are going to take the students down a different path, one that (hopefully) leads to transformation on the part of the students, and then show them how this path differs from a traditional perspective. In all of their descriptions, this use of process-oriented language and metaphor indicated the inherently unfinished nature of the work of social justice but also reiterated their commitment to engaging in it. For

these educators, social justice pedagogy is more than a process of engagement within the classroom; it is a way of being in the world.

Conclusion

Social justice educators in this study reported that they view their approach to teaching as more than a job; it is a way of being that includes their positionality in the world, their engagement in critical reflexivity, and their encounters with student resistance. These angles illustrate how participants rely on their embodied subject position in the world to link social justice issues to their lives and the lives of their students as well as showcase how they enact social justice in their own lives. Additionally, they describe their pedagogy as a process consisting of multiple metaphors including journey and growth that highlight how doing the work of social justice pedagogy in communication classrooms is more about the travels than the destination, and how the full manifestation of the process occurs over time. Within their classrooms, participants identify students' starting points and plan material that will stimulate critical transformation as a result of engagement with them, as the teacher, and the material. In this chapter, I have elaborated on the ways that social justice educators in communication think and talk about their work as a process and a way of being. The following chapter examines the socially constructed nature of their classrooms and how they implement their social justice pedagogy.

CHAPTER 5

(SOCIALLY) CONSTRUCTING LEARNING SPACE: COMMUNICATION PEDAGOGY FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

To teach is to create a space in which obedience to truth is practiced.

~ Parker J. Palmer

In 1914 the precursor organization to the National Communication Association (NCA) was formed by a group of speech teachers who felt that what they taught, and by extension how they taught it, was significantly different enough from what was taught in English departments to warrant a separate organization. Since that time, the discipline of communication has focused on the aspects that make the field unique and with that, the ways that we teach the content. Traditionally, this focus has been identified as communication education, or the way that we teach the content material unique to the discipline, and is the subject of the current study.

In 2002, *Communication Education*, the primary journal for scholars interested in communication and instruction, edited a special volume to commemorate the last 50 years of scholarship and publishing on these topics. Many contributors marked the changes that have occurred in research over the years and how the patterns have waxed and waned as different topics appeared on the scene,

became popular, and then faded from sight only to re-appear later in different iterations and with more complexity. Sprague (2002) remarked that this pattern could be described metaphorically as an upward spiral and explained that, "probably the best illustration of the spiraling nature of this journal's development is the ongoing push and pull between practical recommendations for those who teach and the need to develop more general theories about communication and instruction" (p. 340). Book (1989) provided a clear pronouncement of the changes that were needed in communication education research to reflect the ways that we teach our material in discipline specific ways. She argued that the field of communication has not spent enough time empirically studying the best ways to teach our discipline in the same way that other areas, like science and math, have. Her call was for more research that focused on a discipline specific pedagogy for communication studies. Thus, the current moment, when scholar-teachers are incorporating social justice into their pedagogy, is a suitable time to investigate how their curriculum reflects the discipline as well as their pedagogical approach to teaching it. According to Book (1989), "pedagogical content knowledge looks at the way a teacher transforms the knowledge base or how he/ she represents it to students given their understandings and preconceptions about the content, and how the students make sense of the knowledge base" (p. 318). This project is an initial attempt to understand how social justice educators are transforming the knowledge base of communication content and representing that to their students.

With a discipline like communication, curriculum can include a wide variety of courses making a survey of the best methods and strategies for teaching that

material difficult. Part of the reason for this variation is the depth and breadth of the communication discipline and the variety of things that we teach. This can include courses in public speaking, debate, persuasion, performance studies, interpersonal communication, business and professional communication, public relations, journalism, rhetorical criticism, communication theory, family communication, health communication, strategic communication, conflict resolution, small group communication, applied communication, intercultural communication, organizational communication, and numerous specialized courses across the spectrum in speech and mass communication (Morreale & Backlund, 2002). Despite this wide variety,

> Teachers of communication have, from the beginning, devoted considerable intellectual effort to the development of theory and research supportive of effective communication instruction—efforts focused on the strategies, techniques, and processes which instructors use to facilitate the acquisition and refinement of communication competence. (Friedrich, 1987, p. 4)

In sum, communication educators have long focused their efforts on how to make communication content practical and applicable for our students. Moreover, this attention to application is taken up by instructors in the movement for social justice pedagogy in communication studies where there is a solid emphasis on putting communication content into practice in the classroom as well as the community. This move is characterized by usage of the term *social justice* in course titles, descriptions, and outcomes for the course and is the subject of the current chapter.

The purpose of this chapter is to answer RQ2: How do these communication educators incorporate social justice into their pedagogy? As stated previously, there is no single definition for social justice pedagogy, hence the reason for this

exploratory project into what self-identified social justice educators in the field of communication are doing and then labeling social justice pedagogy. Because participants teach a range of courses in the field, it is not readily apparent how each instructor can approach such different communication topics with a social justice framework. What unites these courses, and the instructors who teach them, is the *way* that they are taught. While no two classes are exactly alike, and no two professors teach in precisely the same ways, there are specific components of their pedagogical approach that establish a shared framework for their classes when viewed across participants. (1) Social justice educators in this study begin by establishing a solid foundation for their courses that is grounded in the belief that reality is socially constructed and that communication is the process through which that construction occurs. (2) They employ the language of what *is* to show how the status quo is problematic and stimulate students to develop a language of what *could be*. (3) They invoke a grammar of terminology specific to social justice issues and concerns in their course materials and introduce students to it by way of the critical perspective. (4) They clearly link social justice to social action through participation in various spheres of social life. In what follows, I analyze data from the documents submitted by each instructor (syllabi, assignment descriptions, reading lists, guidelines for discussion, and reflection questions) and their interview responses to illustrate how they incorporate social justice into their pedagogy.

Reality Is Socially Constructed and Communication Is Constitutive

The focus of an NCA Summer Institute in 2006 was to take stock of social constructionism as a theoretical approach used to study communication behavior. Attendees gathered to discuss the state of the research in the communication discipline making use of this approach as well as propose directions for future inquiry. In an edited volume, Galanes and Leeds-Hurwitz (2009) summarized the conversations from the event, finding that a significant amount of work has been published since Berger and Luckmann's (1967) initial treatise *The Social Construction of Reality* arrived on the scene, so much so that it is taken for granted as a theoretical approach and is frequently implied rather than explicitly stated as a foundation for communication research. As Leeds-Hurwitz (2009) further explained, the notion that reality is socially constructed has become so taken for granted in certain circles that some authors no longer consider it necessary to use the phrase, and it is so thoroughly established that they no longer bother to provide citations to support the concept, which is one measure of how widely accepted a theoretical perspective has become. Furthermore, Galanes (2009) surveyed communication departments and programs to assess how social construction principles appear in teaching across the communication discipline. She found that social construction principles were well accepted in numerous institutions that she felt were indicative of the communication mainstream where they were embedded in the assumptions underlying communication curriculum. This perspective on how thoroughly accepted social constructionism is within the field is relevant to the

current study because it is reflected by all of the participants.

Thayer (1989) stated that, "to be human is to live not in a world of things, but in a world of the meanings of things" (p. ix), where each person born into any social context is socialized into knowing the world through a set of meanings that have been (and continue to be) established through communicative interaction. Indeed,

> Becoming human is not a matter of learning to see things as they are. It is a matter of slowly and imperceptibly learning how to see things and value things and explain things as those things are seen and valued and explained by those who thus inform us. (Thayer, 1989, p. ix)

Those who inform us most often are teachers, who are among the primary agents of our secondary socialization into social and cultural norms. Previous research on how teachers socially construct classroom space highlighted the relationship between teaching and personhood finding that teachers "articulated how the process of teaching is connected to the multiplicity of ways teachers locate themselves in the social world" (Johnson, 1997, p. 279). Within the larger body of theorizing about social constructionism, this indication of location aligns with Cronen's (1995) argument that "identification of an *I* depends on the identification of a *you*" (p. 35, emphasis added) wherein individuals in the social realm make sense of themselves in terms of others. Additionally, Cronen and Pearce (1991) argued that, "the kinds of discourse a person can produce are a matter of what one learns how to do in their language, culture, and experience" (p. 58). Meaning that we learn who we are through social interaction with others in a specific cultural context and that the rules of that context determine the grammars we have available to us for making sense of stimuli in different contexts. Thus, teachers rely on the grammars they know for interacting with others in the educational context and their use of

those grammars reflects their sense of agency for the choices that they make in their pedagogy.

The educators in this study begin their courses from a foundation that reality is socially constructed through communication behavior and they impart this grammar to their students in order to make these constructions visible for examination throughout the course. Within the social constructionism framework, human interaction is structured in ways that create order and make sense out of chaos so that we can function in a world of constant and sometimes competing stimuli. These structural patterns have developed and evolved over time in human groups so that they operate below the level of consciousness and thus we are not always cognizant of them, which is exactly why they demand study. Leeds-Hurwitz (1989) explained that, "we must subject interaction to deliberate study if we are to discover the underlying pattern, for, although we participate in that pattern, we do not consciously know and therefore cannot often verbalize the pattern we follow" (p. 20). For social justice educators, the patterns they are trying to expose are those that result in oppression and marginalization of certain segments of human groups. Through the examination of communication content and concepts in different areas across the field, the participants in this study endeavor to make visible the various constructions that already exist and help students to understand how those constructions constrain specific populations and groups.

Social constructionism also emphasizes the malleability of the social world and how change occurs through specific applications of discourse. The majority of studies employing a social constructionist framework highlight the ways in which

certain categories are constructed through language (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009). Indeed, the largest topic to which social constructionism has been applied is the construction of identity, and all of the various aspects of identity (including race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and sexual identity) and combinations thereof (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009). The hallmark of this research is the emphasis on identifying and analyzing the different language codes (signs, symbols, terms, etc.) that contribute to the construction of a category. In my examination of syllabi for social justice courses, the language codes that the participants used were most evident when they were introducing the foundational assumptions that undergird the course and trying to establish an attitude toward examining it.

Embedded within a social justice perspective is an overarching concern for justice, which is most readily identified when it is placed in comparison with *in*justice. Participants introduce the subject matter for their courses by establishing that there is *in*justice operating, that it is constructed communicatively, and indicating that it will be explicitly addressed within the class. They accomplish this in courses about race and racism or gender and power as well as whiteness in the media and intercultural communication because all of these courses provide participants numerous places to examine *in*justices in social life. For some of these educators, the examination of *in*justice is the foundational element around which all other content matter revolves.

> CW: In my mind, the responsibility of all disciplines is to think about the material practices of how people live. That's what the subject needs to be. And each discipline brings a certain perspective to bear on the material question of how we live together. But my job is the same, which is to get us, the students and I, to think well about how we live together on questions of justice.

One way to get the students to think about how we live together is to examine the ways that categories of people are constructed along gendered, raced, and classed lines. Educators in this study foreground the ways that different "Others" are constructed in the social world as the starting point from which to begin an examination of communication content. They indicate this starting point in clearly identifiable ways in the material for their courses. The most obvious location is the syllabus, more specifically, the course description.

Course Descriptions

The most common place in the syllabus for participants to incorporate a social constructionist orientation is in the course description (See Appendix A). Every syllabus in this collection is equipped with a general statement that describes the content of the course and a brief description of what students are expected to learn. In each description the level of detail varies, but each includes an overview of the course material, the methods for interacting with it, and a sense of the outcomes or goals of studying this material in these ways. They also include a specific tone, vocabulary, and references to broader societal issues. The tone of the descriptions in the syllabi examined here are matter-of-fact and state from the outset that there is a particular communication issue where *in*justice occurs that will be examined, be it the use of media to circulate racial stereotypes, the existence of prisons as warehouses for poor and minority populations, or the problematic construction of gender as having only two categories. The vocabulary introduced includes the terms used in broader academic conversations about these topics (social justice,

*in*justice, privilege, power, oppression, and marginalization) as well as the specific language of critical theory being used to explore them (relationships and structures of power), and is followed up by terms indicating that the goal is to inspire change (revise, transform, reshape, etc.). Using this language helps create the foundation for a social justice course because language is constitutive of reality. As Sprague (1992) noted,

> Language is not reflective of reality, but constitutive of reality. As a social invention that serves the interests of particular social groups, language cannot be judged by its precision or simplicity, but must rather be textualized and interrogated to discover what relations it legitimates and what it ignores (p. 13).

By stating these issues and introducing the vocabulary already in use to examine them, the instructors in this study reported trying to establish a set of problems to be studied within the course as well as indicate how the class will be approaching them communicatively.

For the two classes that specifically included the term *social justice* in the title, there were clear indications of what that term means in the context of the course and how it would be used to explore communication content. Participants reported using this framing and description to put social justice front and center within the curriculum to let students know what they will be learning in the course. It also highlighted the particular paradigmatic orientation being used (critical) and provided some sense of the person who is the teacher by focusing on understandings of the self and other in relation to the course content. As a result, students were notified that the topics covered would include social justice as an embedded component of this particular area of communication study.

A course explicitly titled *Communication, Democracy, and Social Justice* included a clear description of the orientation taken towards course material (see Appendix B). The description explains the intrinsic connection between the communication process and social issues resulting in justice for some and *in*justice for others in a democratic society. This instructor indicated that there are a variety of understandings of justice and that part of the work in this class would be to explore those different definitions in order to understand what constitutes justice and *in*justice. The instructor also notes how the course will proceed with an examination of specific contexts and how routine communication practices are relevant to the examination of justice. Emphasis on the relational component (as opposed to the individual) as a means for understanding and evaluating justice grounds the study of communication and justice in the precepts of human communication behavior as socially constructed and constitutive. Therefore, this description offers a clear indication for students of the things that they will be learning in the course and how social justice is always and already a part of it.

Besides classes that had social justice in the title, classes that dealt with more traditional communication topics also used this orientation. An example from a *Communication Theory* class (see Appendix B) covers a broad overview of theory and a specific perspective with which to understand it. Unlike a generic survey of major communication theories, the instructor for this course specifically grounded the investigation of these theories in the sociopolitical context of a democratic state and used the ideal of a self-governing society as the lens through which to explore social justice. By doing this, students were made aware of the orientation towards

social justice and how this instructor sees the theoretical material being relevant to broader U.S. society.

These course descriptions establish an orientation toward social justice by linking the content to the experiences of both the students and the instructor and placing that material into a larger social context. They do that by grounding the location for study in the everyday experiences of the students in various contexts (interpersonal, workplace, family, and societal) and through the process of studying communication practices (theorizing behavior, understanding the self and other, and understanding individual agency). According to Lederman (1992), "to be successful, the instructor must take and use the students' experiences as the raw materials with which to help them fashion a paradigm for understanding the process of communication" (p. 5). Through the work done to construct this introduction to the course, participants reported their attempt to establish the foundation for how the course material and communication content would be explored constitutively. The linguistic choices to use the terminology of social justice and associated components of a social justice mission helped these instructors to begin constructing the vocabulary for the course and demonstrate to students how to begin using it.

Communication educators in this study start from the understanding that communication is constitutive of our reality and that the grammars we use contribute to either maintenance of the status quo, or challenges to it. They specifically included this underlying assumption in course materials to introduce students to the theoretical perspective and provide a means for exploring

communication content in their specialty area. Using a social constructionist framework, they explore how constructions of difference have material consequences for bodies in the world, and they explore related communication concepts to help build competence, and make better use of our language to build better social worlds. As Pearce (2009) explained,

> We are not only concerned with demonstrating that this and that has been socially constructed and not only interested in deconstructing that which our culture might otherwise uncritically take as "knowledge," but we are also committed to the task of discovering, in any given situation, what are the available means of constructing better social worlds. (p. 54)

To the ways that communication educators working for social justice use their pedagogy for the construction of better social worlds, I now turn.

Problematizing the Status Quo: The Language of What *Is* and What *Could Be*

After solidly grounding their courses in a social constructionist approach to communication theory and practice, communication educators in this study made use of available materials to showcase the status quo in all of its imperfection to begin a conversation with students that problematized the way things are. By employing the language of what *is* (specifically *in*justice) to show how the status quo is problematic, these educators reported trying to stimulate students to develop a language of what *could be*, but is not yet. As one participant explained it,

> CW: I'm always moving between what I would broadly call naming and imagining. So, naming what's wrong and then imagining something different. The naming is the critique, but I think the imagining is sometimes where we fall short. And the imagining is the idea that if we can't imagine something, we cannot put it into practice.

To begin their courses, participants named the various issues we experience in sociocultural contexts to show how they are communicatively constructed and have consequences. As CW noted above, the act of naming, the critique of the status quo, is something that we have done a great deal of already. Indeed, Leeds-Hurwitz (2009) explained that the majority of our social constructionism research has ended with the naming of some phenomenon as socially constructed but rarely do we follow up on those constructions to see if/how they morph or subside over time. More importantly, CW claims that we need to spend more of our time imagining how the world might be otherwise, and we need to engage in that process with students.

To name the world is to have control over it (Freire, 1970) and one of the ways that participants incorporate social justice into their pedagogy is to delve into how that naming has occurred, by whom, and for whose benefit. These educators introduced the different categories of names and provided background on the development of different categories in specific places with their course materials. Beginning with the objectives for the course, participants indicated that a pattern of names exists and students must become familiar with it in order to follow the flow of information in the class. Secondly, the readings offer the most comprehensive literature on the current state of affairs as well as historical background and context to bring students up to date on the development of what *is* that they experience in social life. In what follows, I examine how the course objectives and reading materials for the class presented students with a comprehensive picture of what is and how they might begin to think otherwise—to imagine different ways of being.

Course Objectives

Another clearly identifiable place in the syllabus where participants incorporated a social constructionist orientation for their social justice approach is in the objectives for the course. Sprague (1990) reminds us that, "goal setting is an important prerequisite to every instructional decision that a teacher makes. Whenever you decide to use a certain text, make an assignment, or lecture on a topic, you are choosing these options over other alternatives." (p. 19). In fact, Sprague (1990) went on to articulate four major goals of education (transmitting cultural knowledge, developing students' intellectual skills, developing students' career skills, and reshaping the values of society) noting that,

> Because time and energy are finite, however, and because the underlying premises of some systems are contradictory, educators cannot stress all of these goals as *primary*. A clear sense of the relative priorities of your own goals for education is essential as you go about making daily decisions as an educator. (Sprague, 1990, p. 22)

The primary goals of educators in this study align most closely with Sprague's (1990) fourth major goal of education, that of reshaping the values of society. Teaching communication with that goal in mind requires that students learn to pay attention to the ways that language is used constitutively to construct the systems that we have in place, ask questions about how those systems (and not others) gained prominence, and also learn to look at what is NOT being said (or what is marginalized by voices of the powerful groups in society).

> From these perspectives, communication instruction may have as its goal the identification of sexism in language, the exposure of ideological assumptions in media, and the empowerment of individuals to resist subtle intimidation in interpersonal encounters. Students learn to look beyond what is said. They ask also "What is *not* said? Why? Who profits from keeping communication

> the way it is now? How could changing communication patterns change social reality?" (Sprague, 1990, p. 25)

Classes taught by participants and examined in this study included goals specific to reshaping the values of society towards social justice and are articulated as course objectives for students.

According to Garmston and Wellman (1992), the goals for a course represent the outcomes or end points in the journey through designated material while the course objectives operate as the stepping-stones to getting there. The course objectives offered by the instructors in this study have clearly identifiable steps for how students should interact with the material to achieve the goals of learning about content from a social justice perspective. They also address cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of the learning process by including objectives related to how students think, feel, and act.

The objectives in each course start with the knowledge that we all have sociocultural norms and values as a result of our unique subject positions, that our identity categories position us differently, and that those components will be examined in relationship to privilege, power, oppression and social *in*justice. As a result of those positions and locations, course objectives point out that students will be expected to understand and acknowledge privilege and prejudice and to develop a more sophisticated communicative approach. The inclusion of both cognitive and emotional objectives addresses the oft times turbulent emotional moments that students incur when learning about privilege, marginality, oppression, *in*justice, and their own participation in structures of power (Cooks, 2003). Finally, objectives provide a broader framework within which to understand the importance of

studying communication with a social justice orientation—how they impact democratic practice. This takes the material from course readings and assignments and locates it within the broader sociocultural framework of society, the nation state, and a political system that functions of, by, and for the people. Participants indicated how this move was designed to direct students' attention to the ways that their newfound knowledge can impact their own participation in democratic society and use what they have learned to change and improve social practice.

The social constructionism framework indicates how our social worlds are created through communicative interaction and how it is possible to influence the way people think and act in society by the way we talk about it. As Thayer (1989) explained,

> We literally "say" our worlds into existence, for the only existence they will ever have for us inheres in how we speak of them—in how we create and recreate the mental artifacts with which we must relate to them, to each other, and to ourselves. A way of talking about the world is a way of being. (p. x)

Thus, the specific language choices participants introduced in the course objectives helped continue to lay the foundation for the kind of speaking, thinking, and acting that is desired in a social justice oriented course.

For example, the objectives from a course titled *Performance and Social Change* (see Appendix C) required that students think about how to take their knowledge of course material and put it into practice outside the classroom. This advanced performance studies course draws on the performance paradigm (Pineau, 1994) as a method for understanding both the self and the "Other" through the stylized interpretation of lived events. In this particular course, the theoretical underpinnings

for this type of performance come from Augusto Boal where the main text is *Theater of the Oppressed* (1979). In that light, the first objective simply addressed the need for students to become familiar with this type of theatre and what it is (and has been) used for around the world. Subsequent objectives required that the students learn to perform this kind of theatre as a part of their course work and connect what they have learned with the ways that it can be used currently for liberatory ends. The final objective asked students to apply their knowledge and develop a language of possibility for that which is *not yet*.

The performance studies curriculum in this course on social change offers a unique entrée into both the communicatively constructed nature of the world and a social justice orientation toward it for the very reason that it engenders a sense of what is possible but has yet to manifest in daily life. Through embodied performances taken from the lived experiences of the students and their careful research of the "Other," they are effectively "trying on" different ways of being. This "trying on" experience benefits students because of the level of depth and complexity required to engage in a believable performance of the "Other." As noted in Chapter 4, the participants engage multiple means to stimulate students' sense of agency through performance, personal interaction, and service learning work. This class titled *Performance and Social Change* and described here provides a concise example of what it means for students to try on agency and perform otherwise. Students in this class cannot rely on simplistic readings or cultural stereotypes to perform another and must spend time thinking about the world from the perspective of the "Other" in order to do justice to their performance. That is how they will meet the objective of engaging a

language of possibility and understanding the liberatory potential of performance outlined in the course objectives. In this class the performances of self and "Other" can re-imagine ways of being that are more equitable and aligned toward correcting *in*justice, making them a powerful venue for social justice pedagogy.

According to Sprague (1990), "educational goals should reflect the needs of society, the nature of students, the content of our discipline, and the teachers' own values" (p. 35). Participants addressed this charge by outlining how communication material should be understood and used to meet the needs of society and are reflective of the values of the instructor. For example, in a course titled *Gender, Communication and Culture* (see Appendix C), the instructor included initial objectives regarding the communicatively constructed nature of gender and how students would be expected to analyze it across contexts. The first objective called attention to the ways that gender categories are socially constructed, naming the condition that exists, and was followed by the final objective of helping the students to "sharpen your sense of yourself as a communicative agent related to gender, sexuality, and the public good." Here there is a clear indication of the evaluative judgment students are expected to make once learning how gender is constructed—that they should use their knowledge for the public good, or imagine otherwise. This instructor reported including the public good as a value that she hopes students can contribute to once they have learned the material of the course.

The use of course objectives to establish the situation at hand—what currently exists—as well as to indicate what is possible once students have mastered the material and this particular mode of thinking about it—what is

possible, but has yet to manifest—is another means for how participants established an orientation toward social justice for the rest of the material to follow. In addition to these broad statements at the beginning of the syllabus that mark the direction of the course, the reading materials were another method for establishing the problematic nature of the status quo and pointing towards other options.

Readings

The title and course description provide some of the language codes and necessary background for the topics that will be covered in the course so that students are forewarned about what to expect. However, it is the readings that represent the substance of the course and impart a more concrete description of the material to be explored. The readings are usually organized progressively and build throughout the course from introductory material at the beginning to more advanced, complex, or precise material at the end. Participants reported including readings that covered a range of topics related to the various *in*justices inherent in the topic under study, that they culled from a variety of sources and disciplines, and placed in conversation with the experiential knowledge that students bring to the class, or with the experiences that students will have doing community service work as part of the class. In line with a critical pedagogy approach to instruction, the participants reported aligning course material to take advantage of the cultural knowledge that students bring with them (Kincheloe, 2005).

The communication educators in this study all began with readings that both introduced the topic and challenged dominant normative readings. For example, in

classes that focused on gender, course readings began with articles that highlight the socially constructed nature of gender as an arbitrary binary with only two categories (see Lorber, 2006). In a class on prisons and social justice, course readings began with an overview of the prison-industrial complex and how it is damaging to democracy (see PCARE, 2007). An intercultural communication course began with readings about the cycle of socialization and how we come to understand ourselves as part of dominant and marginalized groups (see Harro, 2000). What is readily apparent about the readings is the reference to the socially constructed nature of both our society and the material from these courses within that society (i.e., gender, race, criminality, etc.). These examples also take a fairly general topic and then expand it to move beyond simple or stereotypical readings. Beginning with readings that establish a perspective counter to the assumed norms of the dominant culture served at least two distinct functions: disrupting seemingly solid categories and the certainty with which they are accepted, used, and re-circulated (challenging the taken for granted norms in a culture); and directing the focus toward future readings that will offer new and challenging interpretations of the topic (looking critically at knowledge).

The goal of studying the socially constructed nature of gender and communication with a social justice orientation is to develop a more complex, sophisticated understanding of what gender means in our culture, how it is constructed and re-constructed, how it circulates, who it harms, and how it could be different. Starting with an examination of the taken for granted norms about what gender is, how it is assigned, and what those assignments mean (both in positive

and negative terms) is the entry point to moving beyond simplistic readings. The reading material assigned for these courses engages in this process and maps the direction that the class will move in developing an understanding of the topic. Once a basic premise for the exploration of gender as a communicatively constructed category is in place, the rest of the readings can delve into a myriad of topics depending on the interests of the professor or the class. At the completion of the course, when students have moved all the way through the readings, they should have a more complex understanding of gender and the tools to interrupt problematic constructions in their own lives and the lives of others, if they so choose.

Beginning with an understanding of the multiple identities and co-cultural groups we all occupy, readings in these classes exhorted students to delve deeply into some of their own identity categories in order to understand where they are in relation to others along the axes of gender, race, class, religion, sexual orientation, and ability. Deeper exploration of identity categories and the assumptions assigned to them helped students to get a better grasp of social structures and hierarchy that place some groups above (or below) others. The complexity of identity categories was also important in these courses because of the fact that everyone inhabits multiple groups at the same time. For example, coming to an understanding of the self as male with all of the associated privileges was then placed in conjunction with understanding the self as Black with all of the associated stereotypes and disadvantages. Individuals tend to focus more on some components of identity than others and it is easier to identify the characteristics associated with marginalized

identities than it is to identify all of the privileges associated with dominant identities (Goodman, 2011). Exploring identity categories also allowed for greater exposure to the *in*justices that impact people from different categories as a result of social group membership. Ultimately, the goal of these classes, taught from a social justice perspective, was for greater understanding of how identity categories are created and maintained, how they can both privilege and oppress, and how to challenge or resist them.

Communication professors in this study reported including readings for their social justice oriented classes that are typically pulled from a variety of sources to represent a broad range of viewpoints, which includes using readings from different fields. Binding the literature with the practice is an important part of these courses, and one that these instructors stated enhances the overall outcome of their interaction. According to the participants, students are more open to the material that comes from a variety of sources because then it cannot be discounted as "mere" opinion. This tendency toward dismissal was especially challenging for participants who embody marginalized social group status because students will tend to disregard critiques of the dominant norms as "just complaining."

> TF: I talk about privilege and oppression and dominant ideologies and hegemony and all of that, and so the first several weeks in a social justice course, that's foundational. We go over all of those concepts and what they mean in relationship to this and I spend a great deal of time talking about it as a *theoretical perspective*. And I'm talking about how you may not like this perspective, but while you're in this class you have to recognize and address the perspective from inside, use your own language of it. Because otherwise it gets completely equated with a personal agenda and the ramblings of just people who are angry.

In teaching courses with a social justice orientation, this instructor finds it more useful to head off these conversations before they start by introducing literature on the critical paradigm and including multiple readings from a variety of sources to show that others are engaging the topic rather than simply hearing it from her (problematic) embodiment alone.

A final use of readings for the course was in how they link the students' material realities with the topic through their prior experience or as a result of the experiences that occur within the class. Because critical pedagogues are concerned with the margins of society, they "seek out individuals, voices, texts, and perspectives that had been previously excluded" in order to bring them into the conversation, resonate with the students, and provide examples of the many different voices struggling to be heard (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 23). Students take classes for different reasons and sometimes those reasons include looking for ways to name their own experience.

> WH: My students get turned on by social justice because they have experienced victimhood… They come to the class because they want to make sense out of some tragedy in their life.

In this course the content is communication, prisons, and social justice and the instructor reported that students who take it are usually intimately familiar with prisons in some way. This instructor explained that they come into the course with a desire to learn more about the topic in order to make sense of their own experiences and the readings he uses provide a link to doing that. This course covered multiple perspectives on the prison-industrial complex and relied on writing by people in different positions to provide the material for discussion. This

included writing by prisoners, advocates, scholars, and law enforcement.

> WH: I'm bringing in Bureau of Justice statistics reports; we're reading novels, plays, poems, history books, newspaper editorials. I mean, they probably get hit with at least 15, 20 different kinds of information from all different fields.

This instructor linked the material students were reading to their own experiences both with incarceration and with the community service work they were doing in the course. By drawing from a wider array of disciplines, the readings offered a range of interpretations regarding the criminal justice system that students could use to assess their own experiences from multiple angles. At different points throughout the class, students were also required to complete journal entries that reflected on their service work as well as the readings. In the course calendar where the readings and journal prompts were listed, this instructor included messages to the students about the nature of the reading, how to approach them, what specific components to pay attention to, and then asked questions that they could respond to in their journals. He has found that these messages help students link the material to the course discussions, to the things that they are experiencing while performing their service, and to their own responses/reactions. He reported that the journal is a space for them to think, feel, and reflect on how the reading material corresponds to their experiences both inside and outside of the class and then share it with him, the instructor. The journals were also a space to begin a dialogue between students and instructor where they could reflect on their world, name their experience, and imagine other ways of being (Freire, 1970).

The readings for the course provide guidance on the direction the material will take in the course. They prepare students for what work is coming up and they

offer specific parameters for completing it. The theoretical literature points out how other people have used it so students have examples and guides for their own process of imagining what might be. The readings also prepare students for the complexity of the discussions on the topic by getting increasingly more detailed as the course proceeds. By incorporating an emphasis on how the topic will be approached at the beginning and then progressing through successively more complex materials, course readings in classes with a social justice orientation pair nicely with the course objectives for learning about the material. They also make use of the established literature in the field to name what is, to critique it as problematic and harmful for certain groups, and provide a springboard for ways that things might be different. Together, the course objectives and reading materials assist the instructor in problematizing the status quo by employing the language of what *is* and establishing the project of imagining what *could be* with sustained creative attention directed towards achieving social justice. These spaces in the course materials of participants have already begun the work of introducing a specific grammar of social justice, but the next section explores how they introduce and use that grammar in more depth.

A Grammar for Social Justice Issues

Communication educators in this study explained finding that they need to introduce students to the grammar and terminology of social justice issues as part of the opening material for their courses. They explained that the groundwork for a social justice oriented course differs from a traditional course in significant ways,

beginning with the paradigmatic orientation towards the material, definitions of the specific topics in the realm of social justice (i.e., race, gender, class, power, oppression and marginalization), inclusion of the embodied persona of the teacher, and the requirement for self-reflexivity from the students (typically achieved through applied or experiential learning, and community service activities). For these instructors, this meant first establishing a critical theory informed orientation towards the material, or a way of approaching it. This critical orientation was introduced with the topic of study and the angle being used to study it, and was typically included with the documents and materials created for the course.

Civikly (1990) stated that the syllabus is perhaps the single best vehicle for describing a course. Additionally, Wulff and Nyquist (1990) explained that the syllabus is developed by instructors and used primarily to communicate the structure and procedures for the course to the students claiming, "it provides an opportunity for the instructor to show an investment in the class, a commitment to the course content, and a concern for student learning" (p. 250). In addition, "there are three primary functions of a course syllabus: to inform students of the *scope* of the work, to identify the *sequence* that the work will follow, and to describe the *tasks* by which attainment or success will be determined" (Saunders, 1978, cited in Civikly, 1990, p. 60). The syllabus, then, gives students an overview of the material, the uses they will be expected to apply the material toward, and a sense of how they will be evaluated as a result. Civikly (1990) also stated that, "the course syllabus enables students to determine on the first day of class the nature of the class, expectations for participation, written work (including due dates), class procedures

and policies, and a sense of the person who is the teacher" (p. 61). In short, participants introduced their critical perspective via the syllabus as part of the larger project of socially constructing the classroom space that students and teacher will work within throughout the course.

As discussed previously, the course descriptions, course objectives, and readings are used to ground the classes taught by communication educators in this study in the social constructionist framework and to help them establish the problems inherent in the status quo. Further uses of the syllabus and course materials included introducing the specific grammars to be used for social justice issues. For example, the use of quotes to set the tone for the document to follow is a common practice in writing across genres. In the syllabus, the use of quotes that highlight important course material or perspectives that will be used to explore that material introduces students to what is likely an entirely new set of language codes. In the next section, I examine epigraphs used by participants as a means for introducing the grammar of social justice and establishing how it will be used throughout the assignments for their course.

Epigraphs

Three of the 8 communication educators in this study included epigraphs related to the subject of the course or the critical theory paradigm that would be used to explore the material in their classes. The content of the quotes used and the authors responsible for the quotes marked the specific grammar being used to discuss the topic and operated as the beginning moments of constructing the social

justice framework for the course. For example, as the opening to a course called *Perspectives on Whiteness*, the instructor used an entire page of quotes (see Appendix D) to introduce his reader to the concept of whiteness and how it relates to racism and racial tension between White and non-White groups. His example was the most extensive use of quotes from the participants in this study and provides a well-rounded sample of statements about race from teachers, poets, authors, and scholars, all of whom are recognized for their work towards an equitable, antiracist society. As he explained it, in reading these quotes, the student is exposed "right away" to a sense of the topic for the class as well as the person who will be teaching it. The tone and the language used in this sampling of quotes indicates that the majority of White people do not see racism as something that they regularly participate in because they have not been taught to see racism as a structure that conveys privilege to some and not others (McIntosh, 1985). Using statements about the nature and definition of racism at the beginning of the document foregrounds the grammar being used in the course and provides a clear link between whiteness and racism and indicates that these topics will be discussed in tandem. From a social constructionist perspective, the two should be discussed together given that, "the ways in which we commonly understand the world, the categories and concepts we use, are historically and culturally specific" and "not only are they specific to particular cultures and periods of history, they are seen as products of that culture and history, and are dependent upon the particular social and economic arrangements prevailing in that culture at that time" (Burr, 1995, p. 3-4). Thus, having established the links between the historical legacy of racism, the

economic disparity between racial groups, and the current conversation about whiteness, the course can proceed as an examination into the ways that certain groups are constructed into categories based on a foundation of White supremacy in the U.S. cultural context. The statements in these epigraphs about race, White racial identity, hierarchy, power, and debasement also serve as an indicator that social locations (likely their own) will be part of the content for the class. Further, acknowledging the difficulty of engaging in self-examination, especially by people who do not see themselves as contributing to the structure of whiteness, becomes part of the linguistic code for this course that takes a social justice approach to identity.

Students who were (perhaps) unaware of what this class would be about were treated to a bevy of descriptions in these quotes that should have helped broaden their understanding of what whiteness is and how the class would be exploring it. They were also exposed to the broad range of things that are included in the structure of whiteness. Further, addressing the types of feelings and emotions self-examination around the topic of race can produce in people (even those who believe that they are unbiased) helped brace students for what was to come. Hence, this collection of quotes provides various points of contact between the lives and experiences of the students coming into the course and the material that will be studied. Together, these quotes provided a wide-ranging array of statements about race and privilege that foreground the topic of the course and provided an indication of the types of *in*justice to be examined throughout. As part of learning about the self and others in this class on whiteness, these epigraphs

acted as starting points to begin the work of thinking about social location and how it is implicated in the perpetuation of whiteness.

As discussed in Chapter 4, these educators feel compelled to highlight the ways that their classes differ from traditionally taught courses so that students can decide if they want to take part. In these examples, the epigraphs used to introduce the course content were part of that disclosure. Placed at the beginning, they were the initial signposts to indicate the direction of the course. They worked to communicatively construct the direction of the course by using the terms related to social justice issues (race, racism, gender, sexism, power, oppression and marginalization), placing them in context so that students understand when, how, and why they are being used, and establish the expectation that the students will learn how to use them in their exploration of the communication content of the course. This language is also an implicit indicator of the self-reflexivity that will be required of students while working on course material, which is another component of the social justice pedagogy approach exemplified by these instructors that will be discussed later.

Participants also used epigraphs to introduce an attitude and a critical mode of thinking about the content of the course. According to Kougl (1997), "the success of teaching and learning depends on the effectiveness of communication among the teacher and students and that subject matter is not all that is at stake, but also students' *attitudes* about self, the subject, and education as well" (p. xi). The use of epigraphs to establish certain sensibilities toward the course material was also a way of leading into the communication content of the course by highlighting how

certain categories and perspectives are communicatively constructed, and thus changeable. For the course *Gender and Communication* (see Appendix D), the use of epigraphs was similar to those used for the class on Whiteness (discussed above) in that they highlighted the concepts to be studied (gender) as well as ways to begin thinking about it—by questioning what you already (think) you know. However, here, the instructor used quotes to indicate that the reader should begin to establish the habit of mind to question what is presented as knowledge and to apply one's own critical thinking to the material. To jumpstart that process, it included epigraphs about the arbitrary nature of gender as a binary category and a provocative response to that binary. As Burr (1995) explained,

> Social constructionism insists that we take a critical stance toward our taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world, including ourselves. It invites us to be critical of the idea that our observations of the world unproblematically yield its nature to us, to challenge the view that conventional knowledge is based upon objective, unbiased observation of the world. (p. 2-3)

Therefore, the effect of this combination of epigraphs was to indicate the already constructed nature of gender as a social construct and establish how students would be expected to look at it differently than they have before.

Epigraphs used by participants introduce the language, or grammar, of the class and the instructor by virtue of their position on the syllabus (at the beginning). They may also identify the perspectives of the teacher and indicate a level of investment in the topic. Hence, the epigraph is a potent signaling device for what is coming next, sets the tone and outlines the vocabulary for the course and the manner in which it will be engaged as the semester progresses. By offering examples of the language being used to discuss social justice issues in context

through epigraphs, the participants introduced not only the language and terminology but also showed how it is used in the literature by people who are already doing social justice oriented work. Then, they followed up with that same language in course descriptions and objectives (as described above) and began asking students to use it in their own work completing the assignments for the course.

Assignments

In the classroom setting, the assignments that students will be completing are the exercises that are created to teach, reinforce, and assess the concepts and how students are making sense of them (McKeachie, 2006). The assignments provide an entrance into the material, a way of exploring the different dimensions of a topic, and the supports that the students can rely on to complete them. This section explores how the assignments used by participants augmented the grammars students were introduced to and expected to use in their social justice orientated courses.

The communication professors in this study used similar types of assignments across interest areas that generally included some form of writing, speaking, and acting. These assignments fit within the parameters of the discipline in that communication educators are primarily concerned with teaching students communication competence in varying contexts. Communication competence—how effectively one is able to convey their thoughts, feelings, and emotions with others through written, spoken, and nonverbal messages suitable to the context—is

foundational in the discipline and undergirds all other work that communication scholars do (Friedrich, 1987). Communication competence is demonstrated through conscious application of course materials to produce a tangible product that can be assessed. The assignments in courses with a social justice orientation included opportunities for students to explore *in*justice in various contexts and, according to participants, were intended as a means for students to examine different issues hands-on and in greater depth.

For example, a class titled *Perspectives on Whiteness* included a racial policy debate assignment combined with a team paper. The debate assignment (see Appendix E) required students to choose a topic related to the content of the course and research it for a policy debate with their peers. The topic had to be related to whiteness and its potential policy implications whereby the students would be exposed to the perspectives and arguments of proponents and opponents that would deepen their understanding of the policy, who it benefits, and who it does not. The instructor explained that this project provides students a place to research a current issue, assess arguments for and against particular policies, and create their own position from which to debate. Combined with the team paper that provides background and research on the development of the issue and how it relates to course material, this assignment is an entrée into the exploration of how communities decide issues of justice and *in*justice with respect to race. The combination of writing, speaking, and acting also provides a challenging environment to practice communication competence and put their skills into practice.

Participants have also created and used assignments designed to expose students to course content in situ. As will be discussed, participants linked social justice to social action, and part of that linkage occurred through service learning and activism themed assignments. Six of the 8 participants incorporated some form of civic participation, service learning, or activism as experiential learning components of their course. By linking the course material with situations where it is enacted, students can see communication processes in action, understand the complexity involved in addressing community problems, and broaden their sense of agency as they become involved in their communities. A class called *Communication, Culture, and Social Justice* included the option of working with different service groups struggling to address *in*justice in their communities (see Appendix E). This assignment introduced students to the kinds of work that occurs in communities and suggested ways for the students to become involved with them. By including the goal of challenging systems of privilege and oppression, the instructor stated how this assignment links course material to the examination of *in*justices in social and cultural interaction and stimulates students to develop a communication-based response. In their response, students were expected to use the language and grammar of the social justice issue they were addressing in ways consonant with how the community group affected would use them. They were also required to enact both a class presentation (for the benefit of their peers) and a public presentation (that would benefit members outside of the university setting). This form of acting—using their knowledge and skills to act—in ways that might

benefit the public is a requirement for this instructor to feel like her course includes a social justice component.

The assignments described in this section provide students with a silhouette, an outline of all the main points that will be hit upon in the class. They require that students do work with the material and then reflect on how that work is related to the theoretical concepts that have been discussed in class. Hence, experiential learning is linked to theoretical material to make the concepts concrete and ground them in the lives of real people. As Sprague (1992) noted,

> A transformative intellectual is not merely concerned with giving students the knowledge and skills they need for economic and social mobility, but with helping them discover the moral and political dimensions of a just society and the means to create it. (p. 8)

As transformative intellectuals concerned with reshaping the values of society towards social justice, these instructors reported providing descriptions for the type of work that needs to be completed to help each organization promote their goals for a just society and offering examples of the kinds of projects that students are able to engage in. These descriptions offered an outline but the students were free to fill in the contours depending on their areas of interest or the topics that appealed to them the most. Providing this kind of outline gave students an idea of where they were going and what the coursework would look like when completed, but it also left plenty of room for them to choose their own path for how to complete their projects. This approach aligns with a great deal of critical pedagogy literature that emphasizes the influence of students on course design or assignments as a means for sharing power and teaching toward equity (see Aronowitz, 2001; Shor, 1992).

Communication educators introduced and used a specific grammar for social justice issues in their courses. They drew on the literature to define and explain terms, provided examples and how to use them, and incorporated assignments that students then used to try them out in their own experience. This grammar was evident in numerous places throughout the materials for the course, but two that bear mentioning here are the epigraphs used to introduce the course and set the tone, and the assignments, where students have the most opportunity to use this new language. It is important to note that these grammars were also evident in course descriptions and objectives and, combined, the documents for the course reinforced each of the components of a social justice approach to pedagogy discussed herein. One final component used by the participants to include social justice in their communication pedagogy was providing a clear link between social justice and social action.

Social Justice Requires Social Action

A final, but pivotal, component in the pedagogical approach of communication educators in this study was linking social justice with social action. Based on the underlying assumptions of social constructionism, with its attendant perspectives on the creation, maintenance, and change of the various rules that govern social structures, the participants emphasized engagement in social action as a fundamental part of their courses. Through participation in social spaces and with others in those spaces, students were asked to put their nascent grammar of social justice issues to use. The emphasis on the social component of action cannot be

overstated since it is in and through such exchange that reality can be transformed or re-created to emphasize better ways of living together. Lannamann (1991) argued specifically for an ideological-material approach to the study of interpersonal communication precisely because of the ways that social behavior, over and above any conception of individual behavior, was responsible for the systems in place that govern social interaction. Thus, it is in the social exchange between people in groups that our reality is made, and this is one reason that participants reported requiring students to participate in social action as part of their social justice oriented course. Social justice requires social action and the assignments and discussion expected by these instructors in their classes is one mode of preparing the students for social action, citizenship, and agency in the classroom space and beyond.

In the context of the courses taught by these educators, social action begins with how we speak and act towards each other in the classroom space. To that end, clear and descriptive guidelines for classroom discussion provided parameters to help students begin that process. All 8 participants included statements about the expectations for classroom climate, respectful interaction with each other, and creating a space for engagement with the topics of the course. One instructor provided a separate document detailing the guidelines for discussion she uses in all of her classes (see Appendix F) and others reported using class time to co-construct guidelines with students. Noteworthy is the emphasis on respect for other opinions as well as the expectation that students will both offend and be offended at some point in the discussion(s).

Given the emphasis on communication content and how it is constitutive of reality, participants acknowledged that these conversations evoke strong emotional responses. In fact, some of them included a note about the emotionally charged nature of the topics on their syllabus as a way of indicating the direction that in-class discussions may go. For example, 1 participant included a detailed statement on her syllabus for a social justice oriented class about how to both feel and express those feelings while staying connected to the theoretical perspective being discussed and honoring the collective within the class (see Appendix G). The participants indicated their awareness of the charged atmosphere that could develop in their classrooms and reported being transparent about it with students in their course materials. This is important because, within the social constructionism framework, Leeds-Hurwitz (1989) explained that, "there are unstated rules which govern interaction, and the majority of people are not only willing but adamant about following those rules" (p. 17). Additionally, in previous classroom research where conversations about race as a socially constructed category were analyzed, Leckie (2009) found that students abided by the social rules that indicate students should "play nice" and avoid controversial topics in the classroom space so as not to upset anyone.

Participants indicated their awareness of these patterns of avoidant social behavior and the compunction to follow them by "calling them out" in the syllabus and other documents for the course. They also reported introducing a standpoint, or a way of viewing the material presented in their classes that asked the students to understand *in*justice from the perspective of the marginalized. Dubbed "pivoting

the center" by Bettina Aptheker, this process includes "coming to believe in the possibility of a variety of experiences, a variety of ways of understanding the world, a variety of frameworks of operation, without imposing consciously or unconsciously a notion of the norm [….] to center in another experience" (Brown, 1989, p. 921). Students come into the classroom having been socialized into particular perspectives on the world and their own location within them. They have been taught to "see and analyze the world in particular ways, and [have] been taught that there are normative experiences and that they are those of white, middle-class, Western men and women" (Brown, 1989, p. 921). Without a deliberate strategy for disrupting their inherent reliance on those norms, there is little chance for students to center in the experience of another. Brown (1989) argues that,

> All people can learn to center in another experience, validate it, and judge it by its own standards without need of comparison or need to adopt that framework as their own. Thus, one has no need to "decenter" anyone in order to center someone else; one has only to constantly, appropriately, "pivot the center" (p. 922).

As part of the framework for communication classes taught by participants concerned with social justice, "pivoting the center" becomes a mode for how to engage the perspectives of others.

> CW: We talk about pivoting the center as a way of understanding that the knowledge we have is limited and that our location both expands and limits what we know, so we have to start from knowing that what we know is limited and that requires us to pivot the center. And a lot of times, students will think, "Oh, I get it," but then as we go on and we'll come back to that and there will be situations where I think there's a need for that but it's not happening. So, I can say, "What does it mean right now to pivot the center? And are we doing that?"

This instructor reported using the language explicitly with her students to help them formulate a vocabulary for doing the work of social justice in her classes. She has found that students will begin the semester in agreement with the concept of "pivoting the center" but when topics involving race or class issues come up that require them to engage in the practice, the classroom will fall silent. In order to address that silence and remind them of the goals in pursuing the topic from this perspective, she finds it necessary to remind them what this mode of thinking requires. Through the group discussion, she has found that students are usually able to work through the topic and center the experience of the "Other" by being reminded of what the perspective taking process entails. This demonstrates an important quality of the standpoint, which is that it can be put into place at the beginning of the semester, but that students need to be reminded how to use it for it to be effective. The introduction of perspective taking as a way of thinking about and approaching the material is an important component of the social justice framework that operates in the background throughout the entire class.

Besides guiding their activities in the course, and linking student experiences to course material, the expectation of social action requires students to do two things simultaneously—engage in self-reflexivity and provide critical feedback to their peers—that contribute to the overall structure and parameters for the course. Reflexivity—the practice of taking account of the self, or turning a critical mirror on your own thoughts and ideas—requires students to think consciously about *how* they are thinking, feeling, and responding to the course material, the instructor, and each other. Engaging in self-reflexivity requires students to become more in tune

with their own responses so that they can name and articulate those responses as part of their learning. As Fassett and Warren (2007) explain it, "discerning how our communication, our performance and our language, creates who we are and defines our work… is a reflexive act" (p. 50). Without reflexivity it is difficult to place the ideas of others in relation to your own and students who do not engage in reflexive thinking are less likely to be able to understand their own experience, much less center the experience of another. Participants have found that when they establish a climate for reflexivity in class discussions by modeling it themselves, and then require reflexive thinking in course writing assignments, students are much more capable of performing to meet that standard.

As discussed in Chapter 4, participants engage their social justice pedagogy as a "way of being" that is grounded in critical self-reflexivity and their behavior in class serves as a model to aid students engaging in that process. Additionally, they provided prompts that guided student reflections in response papers and journals and paired them with specific course objectives that required demonstrating self-reflexivity. The reflection questions for a class titled *Whiteness in the Media* (see Appendix H) covered multiple topics related to whiteness, the social construction of racial categories, the ways that those constructions have impacted different minority populations, and how the concepts in the literature relate to the lives and experiences of the students. These reflection questions were also paired with one of the course objectives that asked students to "demonstrate self-reflexivity and interrogate one's own feelings related to race and privilege." Reflexivity, as a habit of mind, requires that student always keep their own reactions and responses in the

forefront as they approach new material, especially that which challenges or collides with their previously held assumptions. By thinking "reflexivity first," students were better prepared to unpack their own responses and remain open to the process of "pivoting the center."

Focusing the mirror on the self is one component of student contribution to the framework for the course, and turning the gaze outward to their peers to provide critical feedback is the other. The participants reported that the role of the cohort engaging in social action in classes with a social justice orientation is pivotal to the overall process of learning. Students come into class with a wealth of life experiences. They are qualified to share those experiences and reflect upon them in relation to the course material for their own benefit as well as the rest of the class. Therefore, they are required to do some of the work in maintaining the framework for learning in social justice oriented classes because of the very nature of the class as being concerned with social justice. Students are both student and teacher (in a Freirean sense) in these classes and as such have insight to offer about the nature of *in*justice from their perspective. More than that, students contribute by providing critical feedback to their peers through classroom interaction. The rest of the class functions as the first audience with which students can engage the language of the material and they practice using it during discussion and when performing peer review. In these moments students can sometimes provide each other with comments that the instructors cannot.

For example, during a final presentation in a class called *Communication, Prisons, and Social Justice*, the professor relayed that a White male student described

an event from a day of service with the local police. In this presentation, the student portrayed his volunteer service as a form of heroism for "catching a bad guy" and "getting drugs off the street." However, in the question and answer session following the presentation, the other students in the class protested his activities as a violation of civil rights, citing illegal search and seizure. In this instance, the other students provided a critical reading of the activities reported in the presentation that reflected a different interpretation of the events than the presenter had come to on his own. This feedback was pivotal in connecting the presentation to the overarching themes about the criminal justice system in the course, but could not as easily have come from the White male instructor with his power and authority as the teacher.

> WH: Instead of me grading him down, I think his classmate's response to him was pretty enlightening. I think he was clearly shaken. I think he walked in the door to give a presentation in which he had committed a heroic act. And I think during Q&A he got the sense that maybe he had not only committed an illegal but quite possibly a racist act.

Because other students were able to reflect back an oppositional reading of the material, the student was forced to engage in further reflexive thinking as his perception of the events came up against those of his peers. This example illustrates how students practiced what they learned in the course, using their knowledge and agency to voice critical feedback to their peers and take on the responsibility of creating learning moments for one another.

The framework for social justice oriented courses provides a structure with which to view and understand the material and brings students in contact with the perspectives of others. It also provides guidelines for how to perform the work of

the course and get the most out of the experience. Finally, the framework includes the students and their role as participants and learners in co-constructing knowledge. While social interaction begins with how we speak and act in the classroom space, it does not end there and participants reported using assignments that require community participation as another social location to construct new possibilities for being. As mentioned earlier in the discussion of assignments with a service learning or activism theme, participants linked social justice with social action in community settings as well. Whether it was through volunteer service with a community organization or as part of a public presentation of the work performed in class, students in these courses were required to engage with populations outside of the university to connect their communication content with multiple lived realities. As discussed in Chapter 4, all 8 participants indicated the history of the communication discipline as part of the liberal arts tradition of preparing future citizens as one of the foundations for their praxis. In light of these underlying beliefs, their use of assignments that require community participation, activism, and the exercise of critical agency round out their pedagogical approach by linking social justice unequivocally with social action.

Conclusion

Communication instructors in this study who incorporate social justice into their pedagogy built it in at successive levels of the curriculum, beginning with a foundational orientation toward reality as socially constructed. From there, they utilized the language of what *is* to problematize the status quo and stimulate

students to consider what *could be*. Also, by introducing and using a specific grammar of social justice issues, topics, and terms, they modeled how students could develop and use the language in their own work. Finally, they clearly and conscientiously linked social justice with social action so that students did more than learn the grammar abstracted from reality, but were stimulated to put it to use as they performed service and engaged in community interaction.

The description and explanation in this chapter has been to report on the things that self-identified social justice educators reported including in their classes to understand how they engaged *social justice* within their communication pedagogy. The purpose for doing so has been to gain a better understanding for what it is they are doing in their classes and to understand how it is representative of social justice for them. Given Pearce's (2009) charge to "discover, in any given situation, what are the available means of constructing better social worlds" (p. 54) it seems clear that participants are attempting to do that through the application of their pedagogy. Indeed, Thayer's (1989) point about learning to become human in a socially constructed world bears repeating here:

> Becoming human is not a matter of learning to see things as they are. It is a matter of slowly and imperceptibly learning how to see things and value things and explain things as those things are seen and valued and explained by those who thus inform us. (p. ix)

I would also argue that social justice educators are employing their pedagogical approach in an attempt to teach students how to see things and value things and explain things from an anti-oppressive perspective that "focuses on the processes of developing practical wisdom about what to *do* in particular situations" (Pearce, 2009, p. 54) to bring about a world that could be, but is not yet.

CHAPTER 6

CHARACTERISTICS, COMMONALITIES, AND QUESTIONS IN SOCIAL JUSTICE PEDAGOGY

This project materialized out of my own consternation and curiosity about how to teach communication while holding social justice as a larger goal. My teaching preparation and experiences seemed to indicate that this was possible, but there was not a solid direction for how to get there. Like many other things, pedagogy is both an art and a science (and here dance, poetry, and music come to mind). In these pursuits, there is both an underlying framework for how to compose movement, verse, and notes combined with the qualities that the artist brings to them. The same is true of pedagogy since there are basic tools that can be applied in each classroom and be combined with the qualities that the teacher brings. One of the reasons that this project called to me was a desire to understand what some of these qualities were and if they were combined with different tools (or merely similar tools applied to a different purpose) so that, ultimately, I would become a better teacher. In trying to find ways to improve my own teaching, I also sought to identify specific components that were common to people who were already doing this work with the hope of providing a set of maps to anyone who wanted to follow along with me. I believe that I have, and those characteristics and

commonalities, along with the questions that remain, are the subject of this final chapter.

The previous chapters have described how communication professors in this study think and talk about their work and how they reported incorporating social justice pedagogy into their courses. The analysis of these characteristics contributes to a broader understanding of what self-identified social justice educators in the field of communication are doing in their classes and how they conceive of it as social justice practice. Analysis of the characteristics common among them provides more insight into how these instructors include social justice pedagogy in their courses, but it also contributes to the ongoing conversation about a discipline-specific pedagogy for communication studies (Sprague, 1993).

Book (1989) explained that communication has lagged behind other disciplines, like math and science that have devoted effort to researching the best methods and strategies for teaching their respective disciplines. Instructors in these areas are representing the discipline to students in thoughtful ways that incur broader thinking about the knowledge base of the field, and she argued that communication studies needs to be doing the same. In a prior article, Book and Cooper (1986) explained that,

> Many unanswered questions regarding the relationship of instructional strategies to communication learning and skill development, as well as the relationship of students' attitudes toward communication and their knowledge and skills have yet to be examined. Examination of these questions would allow us to predict outcomes of instructional strategies, explain what difference various instructional strategies make, and ultimately prepare teachers to use appropriate strategies (p. 11).

Here the emphasis is on conducting the type of research that will help communication educators to do their job more effectively by finding out what strategies work best in teaching the field. To whit, Staton (1989) defined the field thus,

> Communication education (formerly speech education), one of the oldest fields of our discipline, is the study of the teaching of speech communication…. The focus of the field is on content, methods, strategies, evaluation, and materials for teaching speech communication…. In addition to focusing on literature within the discipline of speech communication, those who study communication education also examine the theories and practices in the field of education and apply these to the teaching of speech communication (p. 365).

Book (1989) also asserted that, "we need serious examination of the pedagogical content knowledge in communication education…. We need to enhance teachers' content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and curricular knowledge if we are to enhance students' understanding of the communication discipline" (p. 320). Following her, Sprague (1993) outlined what a discipline-specific pedagogy in communication studies might look like and emphasized six specific commitments it would address. Among them were the ideas that communication is, by definition, a complex, ongoing and social process where much of the behavior is performed, embodied and usually oral, as well as unconscious or automatic. In addition, this type of pedagogy would have to recognize that speech is tied to personal and cultural identity categories and that there is a relationship between communication and the structures of power that operate in a society. This study has attempted to address what a discipline-specific pedagogy in communication for the purpose of social justice includes and how it might inform our practice throughout the discipline to enhance other instructors' pedagogical content knowledge.

Given that self-identified social justice educators in the field of communication are particularly concerned with social *in*justices that are created, maintained, and constrained by communication, their approaches to teaching communication content have the potential to offer important insights into the development of discipline-specific pedagogy, which is why I was so keen to study them. These educators reported asking students to take communication content and apply it to socially significant topics and understand phenomena through the lens of human communication theory, practice, and research. Because, according to Book (1989), "how teachers understand the disciplinary knowledge and how they represent that content to students through the individual pedagogical content decisions and the broader curricular decisions they make affects the nature of knowledge students will come to have about the discipline" (p. 320). Sprague (1993) added that teachers with discipline-specific pedagogy make the content matter clear without trivializing it. Thus, studying their self-reported practices provided me a means to begin understanding how they were representing the discipline to students and the possible understandings that students might develop after being exposed to their pedagogy. Social justice educators in this study have a particular perspective of the discipline that they are communicating with their students in their classes. They do this in a way that reflects their experiences with the communication content that they have researched and experienced in their lives and careers. Furthermore, they reported incorporating current theoretical perspectives from critical research to close the gap between theory and practice in

the examination of communication content, something Sprague (1993) argued is long overdue in communication education.

This project adds to this body of research and knowledge by examining the discipline specific approaches of communication educators who are teaching with the goal of social justice. Participants in this study teach classes across a wide range of areas categorized within the contemporary conceptualization of communication education, including profuse topics from public speaking and rhetoric, to cultural studies, media studies, performance studies, and critical studies. Therefore, it was beneficial to look at their methods and strategies for teaching communication because there was such variety. Finding common characteristics across them provided useful insights into the nature of a discipline-specific pedagogy for communication studies as well as a means for applying it to social justice ends. Hence, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1: How do social justice educators in the field of communication think and talk about their work?
- RQ2: How do these communication educators incorporate social justice into their pedagogy?

However, in answering these research questions, this study also raised a number of vexing new questions for someone like me who is attempting to learn more about how to enact pedagogy for social justice in communication. In brief, those questions revolve around the definitions of *justice* employed by these 8 participants, as well as their understandings of the *social* components of justice, and their use of *self-reflexivity* in the process. These components represent the

remaining questions I have about their practices that can be pursued in future research on social justice pedagogy in communication and will be discussed later. Therefore, this chapter proceeds with the following sections. I begin by offering a summary of the characteristics and commonalities of social justice pedagogy in communication as these 8 participants communicated them to me followed by the contributions that these insights can make to theory. Next, I explore the limitations of this study and the avenues of future research that this study offers and explore the lingering questions I have about how to understand and enact social justice pedagogy based on the definitions provided by participants. Finally, I close with my concluding thoughts about the nature and importance of pursuing this kind of teaching (and research) in communication studies.

Mapping Social Justice Pedagogy in Communication Studies

This section provides an overview of the specific components of social justice pedagogy as reported by the 8 participants in this study. It includes description of the major components of their pedagogical approach as well as how they understand these components contributing to social justice.

Participants reported using specific pedagogical tools and combining them with their particular goals in teaching their social justice oriented courses to examine the communicatively constructed categories of *in*justice relevant to each of their content areas. The major identifying components of this approach included emphasizing agency on the part of the students, and linking the instructors' individual embodied subject positions, research, and teaching to model behavior.

These components were then measured using activities and assignments that included writing, speaking, acting and reflecting. As mentioned previously, the instructors in this study foregrounded student agency as a defining factor for their courses whether that be through activism in their community, service to a specific organization, or the creation of their own theories of communication. All participants alluded to the classical liberal arts model of preparing citizens and community leaders as a rationale for the assignments, activities, and goals in their courses. Additionally, they inserted clear and specific links between their embodied subject positions in the world (as male/female/transgendered, Black/White, homosexual/ heterosexual) to communication content, social *in*justice, their program of research, and their way of being in the world. Finally, all participants relied on similar types of assignments for assessing the students' growth in learning the material, which included writing, speaking, acting and reflecting. I turn to each individually below.

Emphasizing Agency

Social justice educators in this study reported stimulating students to think and act into the realm of possibility by emphasizing both what *is* and what *could be.* Through their exploration of communication content and the constitutive power of language, symbols, and discourse, participants explained how they taught their students about the conditions of *in*justice created and maintained in contemporary society. They felt that an integral component of understanding the current state of affairs occurred when students went outside of the classroom to research social

issues and perform service for organizations involved with those social issues. This experience was used to develop a strong understanding of the issue being explored (gender, culture, race, media, incarceration, etc.), its importance in social life, and the ways that it was created, maintained, or perhaps resisted through communication behavior. In all of this, participants emphasized the agency of the students to be more aware of language, recognize how they are always/ already implicated within the systems that language has been used to construct, and that they have the agency to act otherwise.

Sprague (1990) asked, "If one sees society as flawed at best, or evil and repressive at worst, then why should students learn to fit in? They should be taught instead to critique and transform their world" (p. 22). Participants explained that their goal in teaching with a social justice approach is to help students understand the current structures operating so that they can critique and transform them for better social worlds. The primary mode through which they reported trying to accomplish this is through emphasizing agency. From their standpoint, this began with laying a foundation of communication content to help students understand the relationship between language and meaning and how our social world is socially constructed through that relationship. Guidelines for dialogue and class discussion were used to help students develop awareness of language and intent so that they could begin to enact agency in classroom interactions. From there, course assignments and projects required that students take up the language of critical theory and communication content that they were learning and apply it to different situations; all of them emphasizing the status of students as active agents in these

communicative interactions. Further, in courses with a service component, students were able to take action in community settings to put their new knowledge into practice.

Common across all social justice educators in this study was their adherence to the model of preparing students for active citizenship reflecting one of the foundational components of communication education. Galvin (1990) explained that, "communication courses speak directly to values that support democratic and cultural citizenship, interpersonal growth, or political awareness" (p. 202). In this case, participants emphasized all of these values to stimulate interpersonal growth as students interacted with new populations, or each other in new ways; expand political awareness of the personal/political nature of language and the connection between language and power; and support democratic and cultural citizenship by stimulating students to participate in community discussions, write letters to the editor, research and debate an issue, or perform service for a particular agency. In all of these ways, participants reported emphasizing agency as a key component of their social justice approach to pedagogy so that the content and assignments were connected to the lives of their students, and what they would do with it after the class was over. In this way, "communication becomes part of one's intellectual life, rather than an isolated academic responsibility" (Galvin, 1990, p. 200). The connection between academic content, application to a specific problem of *in*justice, and the experiences of the students is how these participants reported emphasizing agency and active participation in the world using communication content and behavior.

Linking Embodiment and Practice

Another commonality between the participants is the links they included between their embodied subject positions in the world with the content, their research, and their practice. As discussed in Chapter 4, social justice educators in this study think and talk about their work as a way of being in the world that goes beyond their professional responsibility as teachers in college classrooms. This way of being is grounded in their positionality and becomes one of the ways that students engage the discipline—as a result of their engagement with the embodiment of the professor. A transgender female teaching about gender, a Black male teaching about race, a White male teaching about power, and a gay male teaching about performance all repeated the same insights, that the embodiment of the professor impacted the way students read and understood the material. Participants reported understanding this and using it, conscientiously, to link the content with their own experiences, as well as with theory and research, to model a way of being that is working toward social justice.

All participants reported using their material realities as teaching tools to begin discussion, apply critical theory, and propose alternatives. In each case, the instructor also explained using theoretical literature and current research to support their experiences and expand the vocabulary students had to enter the conversation about each topic. In a graduate level methods course, a Black female instructor used her own research (and negative scholarly reactions to it) to teach her students about methods for conducting research, as well as the ways race inflects epistemology, and how she has been pushed back when trying to publish

about racial issues. She linked her embodiment, program of research, and course content to help students understand the value-laden nature of research and strategize alternatives to enact in their own attempts at publishing. Other participants included their work as activists in the community as another mode for linking their embodiment, research, and teaching of communication content. Both White male participants reported using their experiences as activists in their communities as ways to build their credibility with students and model how to use communication content to enact agency and prepare students for their own service activities. Here the specific experiences of the participants, that were also part of their research agendas, linked their embodied realities to their pedagogical approaches.

An additional component of linking their approach to their embodiment and the content of the course was in how they explained modeling reflexivity and behavior for students. Participants revealed that they view their work as more than a job, it is a way of being in the world, and they reported modeling that way of being as a substantive component of their teaching persona that is intricately linked to their pedagogy. From their initial introduction of social justice issues through course documents, these educators explained modeling a way of interacting with the material that students could follow and practice. They each stated how their courses began with the foundation that social *in*justices exist and are felt more harshly by some populations than others, and that these *in*justices would be the focus of the course. They explained using the vocabulary of social issues (racism, sexism, privilege, oppression, marginalization, domination, etc.) to introduce each

issue and help students understand how to use this new vocabulary appropriately. Also, they reported performing reflexivity from their subject position to both assess their own behavior and model it for students who were learning to do the same. Throughout each course, these instructors explained modeling their understanding that social *in*justice is real, we are all implicated in the structures of power that hold unequal systems in place, our communication behavior is directly related to these issues, and we have the power to be active agents in changing those structures.

In these ways, they worked to advance their pedagogical goals of emphasizing agency in their students and linking their embodiment and experiences to the broader social justice project to model ways that it *could be* engaged using communication content knowledge and (thoughtful) behavior.

Assignments and Assessments

Another characteristic commonality between participants was in their reliance on traditional pedagogical tools but for a social justice purpose. As mentioned above, these instructors reported focusing the majority of their time and attention on emphasizing agency. Their stated goal for doing so was to stimulate student engagement with the material and prepare them for democratic citizenship where they would be prepared to take an active civic role in their communities. Their methods for doing this included numerous assignments common to traditional and radical pedagogies alike. Common assignments and assessments used by participants in this study included: writing, speaking, acting, and reflecting.

Characteristic of the pedagogical content knowledge employed by these instructors, participants explained how writing was used as a way of getting students to think about course concepts, solidify their understanding by explaining them in their own words, trying out new ideas, synthesizing the broad range of material, and conducting an ongoing conversation with the instructor. Drawing from the rhetorical tradition, each participant reported how speaking was used to train students in the essential skills of agency and how to use their voice, making them accountable for their perspectives with their peers, and taking their knowledge to the public. Acting was used by participants in the dual sense of both putting knowledge into action, as well as in using performance as a way of acting upon the world. As participants used it here, acting was in accordance with Arendt's (1958) conception of the *vita activa*—to be active in a civic participatory sense—and in the most general sense of the word as taking initiative, to begin, or to set something in motion (p. 157). In the performative mode, acting is not understood as mere pretending for the sake of entertainment but of trying out an alternative performance of being than one's own for the purpose of learning more about another (what *could be*).

Throughout each course taught by participants in this study, students were required to write, speak, and act upon the material. Participants reported that these types of tasks helped increase the students' exposure to and understanding of the new communication content. From there, students were required to engage in self-reflection as the next stage of their learning process. Reflection on the course material included extension of the course concepts to life outside of the classroom.

Participants explained how students were encouraged to think about the course material in relation to their lived experiences and to consider how they are always/ already implicated in, enabled and constrained by, and responsible to sociopolitical structures. Participants reported carefully and conscientiously emphasizing agency (both their own and the students) and then linking their social justice pedagogical approach to their specific embodiment, research, and practice. In emphasizing agency, students were positioned as active agents who needed to be prepared to exercise their own agency rather than simply be acted upon. In linking their requirements for students with their social justice pedagogical approach, participants reported using their specific embodiment, research, teaching, and behavior to model this way of thinking, acting, and being for their students.

These characteristics of their approach to incorporating social justice pedagogy into communication courses are similar in structure, methods, and goals. The assignments and assessments used by each instructor followed a similar structure (engage with a topic, community group, or organization), made use of many of the same methods (including both a written component and a performance or delivery component), and included specific developmental goals (to apply and showcase what was learned). Students were asked to engage in multiple activities and exercises as part of interacting with the course material. The instructors then asked students to report on them through different communication mediums, discussed previously as writing, speaking, acting, and reflecting. This was amplified by the behaviors of the teachers who were both directing the flow of activity by emphasizing student agency, and modeling an approach that linked their scholarly

identity to the course material.

Combining active and experiential learning strategies provided ways to direct the experiences students have with the new material as well as place them in a more active role with regard to how those activities are engaged and the types of experiences that students have overall. All participants incorporated assignments and activities that required students *to act* as part of their social justice oriented curriculum. In sum, participants included multiple opportunities for students to act on—take action in order to bring about; take action motivated by—the course material presented to them from a social justice orientation. This active engagement with, and on behalf of, underresourced communities (Frey et al, 1996) is consonant with prior research on social justice in communication studies and reflects another common characteristic among participants in this study.

These commonalities across instructors offer insights for a discipline-specific pedagogy in communication studies that relies on commonly used pedagogical tools for social justice ends. Specifically, these instructors used writing, speaking, and acting to teach students a new vocabulary, try it out and put it into practice while reflecting on how it fits into their pre-existing knowledge structures. Additionally, these instructors reported clearly linking the use of these pedagogical tools with their own social justice goals for students to become active agents in their own lives with respect to the content of the course. By emphasizing the socially constructed nature of the world and how that contributes to the creation and maintenance of social *in*justices in different areas, these instructors reported trying to teach students how to go about changing their social worlds through the use of

communication.

Commonalities that Inform Theory

In this section, I examine the ways that the completed analysis offers new insights into critical pedagogy as a theoretical perspective on classroom teaching as well as how theories of social constructionism can be expanded to help understand the process through which constructions occur in a classroom space devoted to social justice pedagogy.

Critical Pedagogy

Sprague (1990) noted, "traditional education has the ideological intent of preserving existing power relationships and indoctrinating students to adapt to the world of oppression" (p. 22). In response, critical pedagogy attempts to make those existing power relationships visible so that they can be dismantled and social systems can be recreated in nondominating ways (McLaren, 2003). As outlined in Chapter 2, the theoretical project of critical pedagogy has gone through several different iterations and revisions when being applied to a North American context and it has been critiqued for lacking practical advice on how to implement it. This is especially true for higher education settings as most of the research conducted using it has been in K-12 environments. However, Kincheloe (2005) offered an updated version that firmly anchors critical pedagogy in contemporary contexts and can be applied to college classrooms. He explained that critical pedagogy is grounded in a vision of justice and equality with the underlying belief that education

is inherently political (Kincheloe, 2005). In addition, students need to be understood as socially constructed beings and addressed as such in classroom interactions and taught to be rigorous critical thinkers who can work for social change (Kincheloe, 2005). This study contributed to our understanding of how instructors can put these concepts into practice in their classroom teaching as part of communication courses that are undergirded by a social constructionist framework.

Participants in this study started from the position that social systems are unequal and introduced students to the language of marginalization and oppression across multiple axes so that they could begin to see those structures for themselves. In this process, they highlighted the socially constructed nature of our reality and helped students to begin seeing it that way too. Instructors also included assignments and activities that would stimulate students to develop their critical thinking skills and apply them to social situations where they could work for social change. These findings provide an example for how to apply a critical pedagogical approach to teaching communication content and added another layer to our understanding of the problem-posing method. In these classrooms, the problem was introduced through the subject for the course (gender, race, culture, media, power, ideology, incarceration), then the instructor explained how it was also a communication problem to stimulate student thinking on how to solve it. One of the main differences between critical pedagogy applied in Freire's initial literacy program in Brazil and attempts to make use of it in U.S. contexts has been the disconnect between the experiences of the students in those settings.

Contemporary critical pedagogy still emphasizes incorporating the experiences of the marginalized into the curriculum and analyzing dominant power structures for the ways that they oppress social, cultural "Others," but what happens when the majority of students are a part of the dominant groups? Giroux (2007) posited democratization as the goal of a critical pedagogy approach explaining,

> Critical pedagogy is not simply concerned with offering students new ways to think critically and act with authority as agents in the classroom; it is also concerned with providing students with the skills and knowledge necessary for them to expand their capacities both to question deep-seated assumptions and myths that legitimate the most archaic and disempowering social practices that structure every aspect of society and to take responsibility for intervening in the world they inhabit (p. 2).

These social justice educators have leveraged this approach by introducing the content through a language of what currently exists to stimulate students to move toward what is possible through their comprehension and application of communication content. They also emphasize agency and provide opportunities for students to engage with the world they inhabit, providing a space to put theory into practice. These findings offer pragmatic pedagogical grounding for a critical pedagogy in communication for the purpose of social justice that can be elaborated and explored further in future research.

Social Constructionism

Leeds-Hurwitz (2009) surveyed the body of research in communication, using a social constructionist frame to find that the majority of those studies focused on the identification of some certain construct as socially constructed, but stopped there. She explained that more research was needed to elaborate on the theoretical

understandings of how various social constructions worked, played out over time, or faded into the background with changes in the societal context. Leeds-Hurwitz (2009) also pointed out that the most prolifically studied topic using a social constructionist frame was identity categories (i.e., gender as a social construction, race as a constructed category, etc.), and that research stopped at the identification stage. This project adds to the theoretical conversation of social constructionism by delving further into the process of creating a classroom space through the use of a specific grammar of social justice.

The classroom itself is already a socially constructed space and is the one that students spend the most amount of time in (outside of their home) for their formative years. In this space, their movement, behavior, and expectations are managed by various existing constructions of what that space is for. Seating arrangements govern the types of interactions that students can have. Class period lengths and bells that announce when it is time to change from one to another govern movement and time. The activities and assignments determine how students will interact with the material and develop their expectations about what happens in school. None of this is news and college students can readily identify these patterns for their behavior when asked to reflect on them. However, the findings from this study elaborate on the process of reshaping those constructions to create a different classroom space where other options are possible.

Participants in this study invoked a grammar of social justice terms (racism, sexism, homophobia) to introduce new concepts and new ways of thinking about them within the confines of the space that students were already socialized into

(perspective taking and pivoting the center). However, participants also used portions of the existing constructions for different purposes (i.e., students still completed assignments, but their assignments included activist work or community participation). Understanding how social justice educators in this study worked within existing constructions and altered components of them to suit their pedagogical goals helps expand our understanding of the process of socially constructing a classroom space—how it is done with specific social justice topics, issues, and language. These contributions add to the understanding of how social constructions come into being and in what ways we might adapt behavior to develop new constructions, making this study a response to Leeds-Hurwitz' (2009) call for ongoing research of various constructions.

Limitations and Lingering Questions

No study is complete without a discussion of the limitations of the project and how those impacted the findings reported on. What follows is a discussion of the limitations in this project as well as some lingering questions that remain at the completion as well as possibilities for further research to address those questions.

For my part, I was interested in pursuing exploratory work that would illuminate the kinds of things that communication educators were including in their courses labeled *social justice*. The identification of participants came as a result of reading published work and attending conference presentations by individuals who included social justice as a keyword in their submissions. However, each of the scholars included here was already tenured (or well on their way to being tenured)

when I began this project. This could easily indicate a skewed sample of communication educators doing social justice work in their classrooms by narrowing the frame to people who were already recognized (and accepted) for doing it. I was interested in the work of scholars who self-identified as social justice educators because I did not want to be in the position of applying a label to someone else's work. However, in this move, I limited the scope of people in the field who might also have self-identified and participated in this study.

Also, by looking only at individuals who were already recognized, I ran the risk of only including scholarship that had passed peer-review, which is the primary gate keeping process in academia critiqued for "disciplining" critical or non-traditional work (Blair, Brown, & Baxter, 1994). In fact, 2 of the Black participants reported having their work rejected from top tier journals at different points in their career for being "irrelevant" or "unscholarly" because of its focus on race, marginality, and equity issues in the field of communication. Given that these participants have still managed to achieve tenure, they were able to find ways to get enough work published to satisfy the structures of power, but what about people who have not? This limitation means that there are likely many more people doing this work at various stages of their career (graduate students, pre-tenure faculty, lecturers, etc.) and in different institutions (i.e., community colleges) that did not meet my arbitrary criteria for inclusion and could be the subject of future research.

In addition, initial data collection hinged on the types of data that participants were willing to share with me to find out what these social justice educators in communication were including in their courses labeled *social justice*.

This meant that I was limited by what information and documents were publicly available (journal articles, conference proceedings, syllabi available online, etc.) or what the participants actually compiled to share with me (syllabi, assignment descriptions, rubrics), which varied widely among them. Following that, I conducted interviews because the participants were geographically distant and I was most interested in hearing their perspectives on their pedagogical approach. This meant that I was the recipient of their stories and anecdotes about teaching as reported through their recollection and perspective. In this, I am reminded by Van Dijk (1984), that interviewees are subject to social norms and may feel compelled to share their best versions of themselves to appear socially acceptable (or *more* socially acceptable because they are pursuing social justice work). Hence, I am limited in the ways that I can interpret their stories because of the fact that I did not observe any of their teaching and am bound by the narratives that they shared. As an initial foray into research on social justice pedagogy in communication classrooms, I realize that these choices were strategic, but I can also see areas where further inquiry is warranted to delve deeper into the issues presented by relying predominantly on first-person perspective accounts, a point to which I will return later.

Thus, the type of data that I collected framed the kind of results I was capable of reporting and these findings are not generalizable beyond this sample. However, given my overarching goals for the experiment, I was able to gather situated qualitative data and understand the perspectives of the participants, which was what I needed for an initial step in mapping their pedagogical approaches for social

justice in communication studies.

To this point, my main goal has been to report the responses that were shared with me by my participants as fairly and honestly as possible. They were generous with their time and resources to aid a fledgling researcher looking at a particular form of pedagogy and they shared their experiences openly. I am thankful for their participation and would never have stumbled upon this next set of questions without the materials they provided me initially. However, the exploration of my original set of questions about how these 8 scholar-teachers think and talk about their work has led me to others as I reflect upon their responses. These questions trouble me because they seem to conflict with some of the larger goals of communication research.

First, and arguably most important among them, is the question of justice as an orienting concept for their work. In our conversations, these participants hovered around conceptions of justice that do not appear to have been explored in depth. That is not to say that each participant does not have a notion of justice that they are operating from, but that overall, their belief in a concept labeled *social justice* was unquestioned. In my own examination of various theories, the sheer multitude of options from distributive and retributive justice to justice as fairness, or justice as blind lead me to believe that this is a concept worth exploring in greater detail precisely because of the vast number of options for how to apply it. Also, while I explicitly stated from the outset that I was not trying to define social justice with this project, there are aspects of the concept that bear further scrutiny to assess what version of social justice is being applied through a communication

pedagogy lens. Not to mention how this looks from the students' perspective or how to assess the outcomes of a social justice pedagogy.

A second set of vexing questions applies to the *social* part of a social justice approach because it begs the question of which set of social norms are used to define justice. I could easily claim that all 8 participants are operating from the social framework of a North American context grounded in Western first-world values based on their upbringing in U.S. American culture, except that they have each experienced that culture differently based on their particular embodiments. This differentiation has influenced their alignment with different social cultural groups and their values (i.e., Black cultural values, LGBTQ values, activist orientation and values, etc.) and prompts me to ask—does each group have the same view of *social* justice? In addition, the social construction of reality, as a theoretical construct is a foundational component of the approach used by each of these educators, but it also appears to be accepted without question. This leads me to question if all social justice work is undergirded by the same views on reality as a social construction? If not, what mechanism is there for comparing different sets of social values, or of collaborating on combined social values that benefit everyone? These questions are particularly irksome because of globalization and the increased interdependence of the world community. In this landscape, which sets of social values determine the script of a social justice pedagogy?

A final set of questions relates directly to the self-reflexive stance of the participants that they reported using in their pedagogy and asking from their students. In light of the questions posed above, I can ask whether their own self-

reflexive gaze is as sharp and clear as they would like it to be (or they reported it being) given their seeming inattention to the larger definitional components of a social justice approach. If a part of doing the work of social justice pedagogy is engaging in self-reflection, then what mechanisms are in place to help communication educators to engage in it helpfully and repeatedly? Here, I am reminded of how counselors are required to participate in counseling themselves to share their issues and problems with others in their field who can provide a sounding board and help to keep the counselor's perspective sharpened that they might better help their clients. Does the work of social justice pedagogy need a similar system? Is it always possible to remain self-reflexive in situations where your own body and ideology are on the line, when engagement with others (perhaps resistant) pushes back against what you believe to be true about the world? Earlier, I reported how these educators engage resistance as part of their pedagogy and what they reported doing to stay mentally healthy in that process, but my question arises from the fact that *I* did not question their perspectives or push back against their narratives in our conversations. What would have happened if I did? Is that kind of conversation the sort of self-reflexivity that is required to engage in social justice work, to keep us honest, so to speak?

I ask these questions here, at the end of my project, because they are the ones that remain and that will continue to occupy me as I go into each new teaching situation and pursue further research. The way that I set up this study was tentative and exploratory to gain a toehold in the world of social justice work. I accepted what was given without question myself to better understand what others were

doing before me. This could be labeled the greatest limitation of this project, but I will also argue that it is the greatest opportunity for me going forward. Social justice is a complex topic with multiple angles representing the injustices that have been visited on people in various positions. It requires patience and care to explore. Communication, as the process through which we make our social worlds, is also complex and multifaceted demanding that we take multiple perspectives at different points in time to see how it has shaped the experiences of people in different bodies and social locations. It is a discipline that requires dedication and passion to inhabit. Pedagogy, the blend of artistic and technical components that imbricate the process of teaching, is tasked with changing to fit the times and the needs of particular student bodies and is endlessly instructive. Each of the participants in this study shared with me their interest and passion for these topics and, while we may not all agree about the subject or the interpretation, they were willing to share their work, which gives me a place to start.

Future research projects that come immediately to mind include follow-up research on each of these participants to include classroom observation and participatory action research, with them and focused on their pedagogy. In addition, the perspectives of the students are noticeably absent in this research, something that I have already begun working on with another colleague who shares these concerns. Yet another strand could include a broad call to other members of the discipline who also take a social justice approach and who did not meet my initial, arbitrary requirements for participating. In my graduate student work and since, I have met numerous people interested in discussing their particular take on

social justice and pedagogy, which makes me think that there are many other people out there doing this work that need to be connected by a network so we can share resources and insights. They are also potential research participants and interested in pursuing a line of research on social justice pedagogy. Lastly, another compelling project to come out of this is one that engages the questions I have put forth here and delves deeper into the definitional aspects of justice, and how we define social in its application. In sum, I see no shortage of inquiry in my future as I consider which direction to follow next in my program of research, and all stem from this initial exploration of pedagogy that is already in play and labeled social justice.

Concluding Thoughts

From my own experiences and through the completion of this project, I have come to believe that social *in*justice is an ever-present component of higher education. I have seen students experience it and have felt it myself. Education for social justice is a move that many educators are making to apply current theory to the practice of education with a mind to reduce these experiences and make education, and then society, more equitable. I want to do that work, but to do that I needed to know more about how to put it into practice from those who have been doing it for a while. The generosity of spirit that my participants showed in sharing the details of their pedagogical approach and all of the materials that they have created for their courses is another unsung component of this kind of pedagogy. I would not have learned as much without their willingness to share their insights, nor would I have been able to report on them here. Potential practitioners wishing

to follow in their footsteps need to know some of the starting points for their journey, which is what I have tried to capture in these pages. In addition, the hallmark of scholarly inquiry is the commitment to question, even the things that we take for granted or use as the foundation of our beliefs and practices. Knowing these things prepares me for going forward to do this work in my own classroom.

Fellow travelers need to begin with the knowledge that social life is structured around *in*justice to privilege the few while marginalizing the many. However, these structures are communicatively constructed and maintained, but also changeable. One potential application of these research findings is to implement them in teacher training programs for GTAs and new faculty within the discipline. Understanding the common starting places for getting students to think about their position in the social hierarchy could advance conversations in communication classrooms to a deeper level. It could also increase the depth of understanding that teachers coming from dominant social positions have about social justice issues and how they can be more reflexive about their own position and delve into conversations about them with their students. Numerous scholars in communication and education have recorded the risky and emotional nature of teaching social justice issues in their classrooms (Cooks, 2003; Tatum, 1994) but my hope is that the findings recorded here can provide a broader understanding of the mindset and processes that other instructors are using to make that transition a little less mysterious (and threatening) and a little more enticing.

Education is inherently a political act (Freire, 1970) and there is little point in denying that fact. Educators who continue to deny the value-laden nature of their

teaching are likely comfortable with the status quo because it benefits them. There are a growing number of people coming into the ranks of teachers in higher education who know the political implications of their pedagogical choices and who are committed (on their own behalf or with others) to changing the status quo to a more equitable future. It is for these educators (myself included) that I have compiled these examples, with the hope that we can implement a pedagogy of possibility (Simon, 1992) and make that which is *not yet* a reality for our students. As Sprague (1990) stated, "It is both our strength and our weakness that we change not just what people know, or even what they can do, but who they are" (p. 23). Communication is the discipline that has the potential to change people, which is one of the most important steps on the journey to social justice. That is the reason why I teach.

APPENDIX A

DATA INVENTORY TABLE

Name:	Interviews:	Documents:
AP—(Associate Dean) Black male professor teaching at a mid-sized urban public university with a diverse student body on the West coast.	2—phone; 1—in-person 01:19:03 01:40:36 00:42:00	CV—abbreviated including only publications Syllabi: ▪ Theory & Method in Performance ▪ Performance & Social Change Assignment: ▪ Two voices performance ▪ Social Change Community Project
Name:	Interviews:	Documents:
SB—(Full Professor) Black female professor teaching at a large urban public university in the South with a diverse student body.	2—Skype 1—in-person 01:11:57 01:09:55 00:55:47	CV Syllabi: ▪ Advanced Interpersonal Comm ▪ Interracial Communication ▪ Interpersonal communication (graduate) Assignments: ▪ Communication Analysis ▪ Discussion Facilitation Guidelines: ▪ Discussion guidelines
Name:	Interviews:	Documents:
WH—(Department Chair) White male professor teaching at an urban public school in the Intermountain West with a homogenous student population.	3—Skype 0:46:50 0:53:58 0:50:08	CV Syllabus: ▪ Communication, Prisons, and Social Justice Assignments: ▪ Essay prompts (2) ▪ Final Project Guidelines: ▪ Writing tip sheet ▪ Peer Review

Name:	Interviews:	Documents:
BM—(Full Professor) Black female professor teaching at a mid-sized urban public university in the South with a diverse student population.	2—in-person 1—Skype 00:58:23 01:08:36 00:42:34	CV Research Statement Syllabi: ▪ Communication Theory ▪ Qualitative Research Methods ▪ Communication Pedagogy Assignment: ▪ Theory paper ▪ Media Critique
Name:	Interviews:	Documents:
DC—(Department Chair) Black male professor teaching at a large urban public university in the Midwest with a diverse student population.	3—phone; 1—in-person 01:02:33 01:23:41 01:35:42 00:57:48	CV Syllabi: ▪ Practicing Leadership in the Community ▪ Perspectives on Whiteness ▪ Intercultural Communication Theory ▪ Media, Race, & Identity ▪ Whiteness & the Media Assignment Descriptions: ▪ Cultural collage ▪ Racial Policy Debate (3) ▪ Literature Review ▪ Leadership Tasks (5) Guidelines: ▪ Preparing a Literature Review ▪ Code of ethics for Tourists ▪ Group work & project management
Name:	Interviews:	Documents:
TF—(Associate Professor & Chair) White female professor teaching at a small rural private liberal arts college in the Southwest with a homogenous student population.	3—Skype 01:02:07 01:31:30 01:23:15	CV Syllabi: ▪ Communication, Culture, & Social Justice ▪ Performance, Language, & Cultural Studies ▪ Performance, Language, & Culture ▪ Communication Education ▪ Communication, Gender, & Identity ▪ Senior Seminar in Culture & Diversity Assignments: ▪ Community Action Project ▪ Constructing Assignments project

Name:	Interviews:	Documents:
RM—(Associate Professor) White male teaching at a rural mid-size public university in the Intermountain west with a homogenous student population.	2—Skype; 1—in-person 01:11:01 00:43:23 01:17:27	CV Syllabi: ▪ Nonverbal communication ▪ Communication Theory ▪ Communication & Power Assignments: ▪ Original Communication Theory Paper ▪ Original Critical Analysis Theory ▪ Debate ▪ Ideology Paper & Presentation
Name:	Interviews:	Documents:
CW—(Associate Professor & Chair) White female professor teaching at a large public university with a diverse student population in Southern Canada.	2—Skype; 1—in-person 00:55:25 01:15:22 00:45:25	CV Syllabi: ▪ Communication, Democracy & Justice ▪ Intercultural Communication ▪ Advanced Intercultural Communication ▪ Public Communication ▪ Gender, Communication & Culture ▪ Persuasion Assignments: ▪ Final Project ▪ Group Project (4) ▪ Group Presentation Guidelines: ▪ Overview of Classroom Dialogue

APPENDIX B

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Communication, Democracy, and Social Justice

Course Description:

Communication and Social Justice will examine the ways in which communication, as the shared process of making meaning, constitutes (in)justice. Course material will focus on a variety of understandings of justice; the ways in which these understandings apply to routine communication practices and broad social issues; and the links between individual agency, public life, and equity and justice. The course will approach justice from a relational (rather than individual) perspective, and will consider justice in four communication contexts (interpersonal, workplace, community, and national/international).

Communication, Gender and Identity

Course Description:

In this course, we examine the role of communication in constructing gender from multiple perspectives, including feminisms, Queer Theory and Transgender Theory. We will explore, analyze and critique mainstream/ dominant gender definitions, roles and expectations in order to understand how categories of sex, gender and sexual identification are used to create, enable and constrain social life. Furthermore, assuming a transgender framework, we will problematize binary logics of gender and sex in order to explore the complexities of gendered identities, including how gender is communicated, (re)constructed and transformed.

Communication Theory

Course Description:

The course is designed to investigate how students can use 'theories-as-tools' for examining the communication-at-play in the social settings they (do and will) inhabit. The course has us examine together the history, nature, and functions of

communication theory.

First, we will investigate how to employ the concept of 'communication' as a theoretical instrument to understand more clearly our social, political and economic lives.

Second, the course seeks to examine how communication and communication theory are central to four primary areas of our lives: (1) the media, (2) personal and social relationships, (3) family, and (4) work. We will unpack how communication is significant in shaping each of these areas of focus in our lives.

Third, students will review their experience as communication majors at [the University].

Fourth, we will examine critically the struggle for democracy and social justice in social systems (such as capitalist systems) wherein the tendency for political and economic power to concentrate among an elite ruling class creates significant problems for the possibilities of an authentic democracy and social justice.

Senior Seminar in Culture and Diversity

Course Description:

This course is an intensive interdisciplinary study of the historical and cultural experiences of racial and ethnic groups in America. In this course, we will focus on the study of culture and diversity, particularly the social construction of "race" and gender.

APPENDIX C

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Performance and Social Change

Course Objectives:

1. Students will become familiar with the aesthetic, pedagogical, theoretical underpinnings of performance and social change.
2. Students will observe and critique these theoretical principles as they emerge through the history of performance and social change in Avant-Garde/ Experimental Theatre.
3. Students will observe and critique these theoretical principles as they emerge cross-culturally in the works of selected Asian and Latin American practitioners.
4. Students will become familiar, academically and experientially, with the technical, pragmatic aspects of presenting/engaging performances for social change.
5. Students will learn to engage a language of possibility and/in the liberatory potential in the practice of theatrical and performance practice.

Gender, Communication and Culture

Course Objectives:

1. To deepen your understanding of the ways in which gender is socially constructed through communication practices, at specific and broad levels, and in a variety of contexts.
2. To further your ability to make links between gender, sexuality, communication, and power in your day-to-day lives.
3. To develop a working understanding of the ways in which gender is learned, performed, and resisted, and of the concept of intersectionality.
4. To sharpen your sense of yourself as a communicative agent related to gender, sexuality, and the public good.

Perspectives on Whiteness

Course Objectives—Upon completion of the course, each student should be able to:

1. Explain the theoretical and philosophical concepts of race
2. Cogently discuss the impact of race on public policy and everyday relations.
3. Explain the influence of socio-cultural forces on discourse in cross-cultural encounters with cultural others.
4. Appraise the role and function of race and the media in the 21st century.
5. Explain and analyze the intersections of race, class, and gender.
6. Compare and contrast theories of whiteness.
7. Explain and interrogate whiteness and White privilege.
8. Articulate the importance of whiteness as a dialectical identity to that of Racial others.
9. Demonstrate self-reflexivity and interrogate one's own feelings related to race and privilege.

APPENDIX D

EPIGRAPHS

Perspectives on Whiteness

"As a white person, I realized I had been taught about racism as something which puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see the corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage. Many, perhaps most, of our white students in the United States think that racism does not affect them because they are not people of color: they do not see "whiteness" as racial identity. In my class and place, I did not recognize myself as a racist because I was taught to see racism only in individual acts of meanness by members of my group, never in invisible systems conferring unsought racial dominance on my group from birth." -- **Peggy McIntosh**

"By racism I mean the self-deceiving choice to believe either that one's race is the only race qualified to be considered human or that one's race is superior to other races."--**Lewis R. Gordon**, *Bad Faith and Antiblack Racism*

"...One of the many advantages whites enjoy in America is a relative freedom from the draining obligation of racial inversion. Whites do not have to spend precious time fashioning an identity out of simply being white. They do not have to self-consciously imbue whiteness with an ideology, look to whiteness for some special essence, or divide up into factions and wrestle over what it means to be white. Their racial collectivism, to the extent that they feel it, creates no imbalance between the collective and the individual. This, of course, is yet another blessing of history and of power, of never having lived in the midst of an overwhelming enemy race." -- **Shelby Steele**, *The Content of Our Character*

"You can ask forgiveness of others, but in the end the real forgiveness is in one's own self. I think that young men and women are so caught by the way they see themselves. Now mind you. When a larger society sees them as unattractive, as threats, as too black or too white or too poor or too fat or too thin or too sexual or too asexual, that's rough. But you can overcome that. The real difficulty is to overcome how you think about yourself. If we don't have that we never grow, we never learn, and sure as hell we should never teach." – **Maya Angelou**

"The anxiety that exists for Whites concerning the subject of race should not be underestimated. It is high even for those who believe they have mastered their biases and especially for those who have made the commitment to self-confrontation. For although many would like to believe they are free of racial prejudice and want to view it as operative only in instances of blatant bigotry, there is tension about checking this out. This anxiety has been expressed in terms of fear of discovering bad things about oneself, uneasiness about unexamined values, awareness of the pervasiveness of racism, of one's helplessness to cope, and of a sense of a sense of entrapment... Management of this anxiety in the interest of confronting bias and achieving greater comfort and confidence in cross-racial interactions should be seen as an act of courage." -- **Elaine Pinderhughes***, Understanding Race, Ethnicity, and Power: The Key to Efficacy in Clinical Practice*

"Even though the law is neither uniform nor explicit in all instances, in protecting settled expectations based on white privilege, American law has recognized a property interest in whiteness that, although unacknowledged, now forms the background against which legal disputes are framed, argued, and adjudicated." —**Cheryl Harris**, "Whiteness as Property"

"By persuading themselves that a Black child's life meant nothing compared with a white child's life. By abandoning their children to the things white men could buy. By informing their children that Black women, Black men and Black children had no human integrity that those who call themselves white were bound to respect. And in this debasement and definition of Black people, they debased and defamed themselves." —**James Baldwin**, "On Being 'White'...and Other Lies"

Gender and Communication

Believe nothing . . . merely because you have been told it . . . or because it is traditional, or because you yourselves have imagined it. Do not believe what your teacher tells you merely out of respect for the teacher. But whatsoever, after due examination and analysis, you find to be conducive to the good, the benefit, the welfare of all beings--that doctrine believe and cling to, and take it as your guide.

Buddha
The Dhammapada

. . . gender is one identity, by reason of the agreed-upon bipolar system, to which we find it extremely easy to cling. Well, cling we do. But is that necessarily a good thing?

Kate Bornstein
My Gender Workbook

I am not a man. I am not a woman . . . there are definite steps to living androgynously . . .steps I take to outwardly manifest my true self to the world, but I vastly prefer to keep my life *out* of the hands of the doctors and scientists and lawyers, et al.

Bonnie
My Gender Workbook

Communication, Culture & Social Justice

Indignation and goodwill are not enough to make the world better... Perhaps the worst thing that can be said about social indignation is that it so frequently leads to the death of personal humility. Once that has happened, one has ceased to live in that world of men which one is striving so mightily to make over.

James Baldwin
"The Crusade of Indignation," *The Nation*

La facultad is the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the surface . . . Those who are pushed out of the tribe for being different are likely to become more sensitized (when not brutalized into insensitivity) . . . When we are up against the wall, when we have all sorts of oppressions coming at us, we are forced to develop this faculty so that we'll know when the next person is going to slap us or lock us away.

Gloria Anzaldúa
Borderlands/La Frontera

APPENDIX E

ASSIGNMENTS

***Racial Policy Debate & Team Paper*:**

These debates are policy debates. One of the best sources for deciding on a topic is the news. Some examples of policy debate topics in the past have been health insurance and healthcare for underrepresented groups, affirmative action; school desegregation; racial discrimination in housing and lending; racial discrimination in hiring and employment; race and sentencing in the criminal justice system; racial profiling; voting rights and racial redistricting; school vouchers; welfare reform; immigration policy; and race-based school admissions. The topic is generally left to your discretion, however no topics may be duplicated by or overlap with one of your classmates and the topic must be significantly related to topics covered in this course. It should not be a stretch for me to see how your topic is related to culture. There is no official final exam for this course. Your final written paper (related to research for the policy debate) and actual policy debate will serve that function.

The 8-10 page policy debate TEAM paper must cover some rudimentary aspects such as: background and description of issue, identification of resolution being argued, major players on each side of the debate, major arguments/contentions of each side of the issue; clear, detailed explanation and support [conceptual and bibliographic] of your claims/position on the issue, strengths and limitations of the opposition, proposed ways of resolving the problem or improving current conditions. There must be a significant appeal to the audience as members of your proposed decision-making body.

Community Action Project:

The purpose of this project is for you to engage theories of social justice in an applied setting. The project may be developed individually or in groups (3 people maximum). You have a variety of options for this project, including (but not limited to) creating collaborating with community partners; analyzing how power, difference and identity are (re)presented at [the University]; designing and (partially) implementing a social justice curriculum (to name only a few). A core element of this assignment is to engage in social justice action designed to challenge systems of privilege and oppression in relationship to particular social groups—working to enhance intercultural interactions in your

community(ies). This project will be divided into four parts (specific guidelines for all four parts will be provided in class):

- *Proposal & Meeting:* In your groups, you will collaboratively define a project idea and connect that idea to published research. In 1-2 pages, you will describe your project goals, timeline, and research. I will provide you feedback and we will meet to discuss your proposal.
- *Public Performance*: In your groups, you will create research-based public presentations and implement those presentations at [the University].
- *Class Presentation*: In class, your group will present the results of your public performance, including the presentation of data gathered in the library as well as "in the field" as you engaged the public performance.
- *Analysis*: Individually, you will submit a paper analyzing your experience working with your group and the relevance of your work for social justice and communication.

***Performance Studies Final project*:**

This final project--may take one of three forms: (Option # 1) an engaged project performed and implemented in the community to meet a particular need. This project should be documented in the public records of human experience, videotaped, accompanied with a brief written report and oral presentation to the class. (Option #2) A comprehensive final examination taken during a designated time, or (Option 3) A research essay of 30-35 pages related to some aspect of performance for/of social change.

Performance for Social Change **Prospectus**: This prospectus is designed to have students construct a plan to use performance as a way of addressing a particular social and cultural issue that effects a specific cultural community within the Los Angeles area. The 4-6 page paper will outline the purpose and scope of your inquiry/initiative. It will contain brief divisions such as: purpose and rationale, methods, background/literature review, limitations to the study. All students are required to engage in this project. This prospectus might serve as the foundational logics for a performance-based final project (option #1.)

APPENDIX F

GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION

1. Remember that reasonable people can and do disagree.
2. Each person deserves respect and deserves to be heard.
3. Tolerance and patience are required of all.
4. Expect to offend and be offended. (Forgive yourself and your classmates in advance.)
5. Respect the courage of some who share things we may find highly objectionable. We may learn the most from their comments.
6. Understand the rules for civil discourse may need to be negotiated on individual, group, and class levels (e.g. gender-linked and race-linked styles of communication may need to be considered explicitly).
7. Acknowledge that all racial/ethnic groups have accomplishments their members can be proud of (i.e. no racial group walks in absolute historical perfection or wickedness).
8. Each person can only be held accountable for what he or she has done. She or he cannot be held accountable for what ancestors or relatives have done.
9. Each person should understand the privileges that he or she has in the United States based on skin color (e.g., Whites and lighter skin people of color) and other social assets such as social class, gender, level of education, and so on.
10. "Equality" between and among discussants should be the relational norm.

(Adapted from James, 1997b, pp. 197-198, cited in Orbe and Harris, 2001)

APPENDIX G

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

Communication, Culture and Social Justice

LEARNING THROUGH COGNITION AND EMOTION

You might find that some of the material we cover will illicit strong intellectual and emotional responses. Although this may not always be easy, it is usual and understandable. Furthermore, these responses are theoretical, structural, and personal. Each of us may personally feel a reaction, but those feelings are not idiosyncratic—they are driven by structural realities and are part of the theories we are analyzing.

Many people are empowered by discussions of social justice and power. It is also common for people to feel anxiety about expressing opinions that challenge the theoretical position we will be engaging. I encourage you to stay in touch with your responses AND to express your perspectives freely. I also expect that we will always return to the theories being studied as we work to honor the collective experiences of the class members.

APPENDIX H

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Whiteness and the Media

Questions for Response Papers:

1. What dangers does author Michael Apple identify with respect to having Whites focus on whiteness? Do the risks/ dangers outweigh the benefits/ positive outcomes? Give a few examples or one extended example of how Apple might be right, or wrong.
2. Compare and contrast the narratives concerning "How Jews became White" and "How Whites became White." Critique each reading.
3. Some say all we need is a pill to become White. Others say we have already digested the pill. What is your take on this? Support your claims with at least one other research/expert source other than the course texts.
4. How is it possible that whiteness is invisible? Is it fair to say that Whites experience privilege all the time, or is that a myth? Support your claims.
5. How do you separate whiteness in the media from what appears to be simply American-ness in the media? What makes media White?
6. How have prestigious American institutions excluded minorities? How have public institutions remained exclusive to Whites? Have efforts to include minorities been adequate? Why or why not?
7. Must all anti-racists be race traitors? Is being a race traitor the answer? If whiteness, just like race, is a social construction, why can't we eliminate both? Deconstruct this term "race traitor" and explain its usefulness and ineffectuality.
8. Why is the Bell Curve so compelling to the American public? Why can't we just ignore Murray & Herrnstein and write them off? If their work is truly pseudoscience, as alleged, is there harm or benefit in acknowledging any of its truths? Why or why not?
9. Hate groups have become sophisticated in the new technological age. Have they also been effective? Explain. Are all nationalists hate-mongers? Can we equate the KKK, for example, with Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam? Why or why not?
10. Are Americans still preoccupied with race to the extent that it is insufficient to self-identify as multiracial without specifying the culture you most identify with?
11. Will White supremacy ever become strange? Will it ever become odd to future generations to talk about race as we do now? Are there still policies that have been harmed by race-based solutions?

APPENDIX I

DETAILED ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

ACTIVISM JOURNALS

Everyone will keep an "activism journal" wherein you write entries (3-4 pages long, due every other week) chronicling your experiences with the group of your choosing. These entries may include poems or raps, explosions of frustration or happiness, philosophical observations or political rants—*it's your journal, so write what moves you*. You will also use these journals to reflect on our class readings. The point is to produce a running chronicle of your work, hence enabling you (and me) to watch your consciousness change. I'll collect these journals and read them every few weeks, so while you'll want to be honest and sincere in your writings, you'll also want to be discreet. I too will share my writings with you. On the days that these journals are due, I will ask three volunteers to present their material to the class, hence building a classroom culture where we share our creativity. Each of your journals is worth 15 points (5 for activism; 5 for responding to class readings; 5 for personal reflection).

ROCK-N-ROLL SHOW-N-TELL

Everybody is assigned a day to play for the class a tune from their favorite band; the catch is that you must introduce the band, explain the song, and demonstrate how the song speaks to our course content. This should take no more than five minutes, so keep it short and sweet. The idea is to watch how crime and punishment are interlaced with popular culture. Please note that while I call this "rock-n-roll" show-n-tell, *all genres of music are welcome*.

IDEOLOGY PAPER/ PRESENTATION

Cultures articulate their values and beliefs both verbally and nonverbally. In this class we are interested in the latter. That is, cultures, such as the American culture, and their embedded cultures, such as the 'hip-hop' or 'sports' cultures, express their values and beliefs via nonverbal symbols such as clothes, music, body language and the like.

Ideology is complex, but can be boiled down to two basic things: (1) the value and belief systems of a culture and (2) how a culture distributes power. Let's look at a brief example. Like most cultures, U.S. citizens value law and order. One way we

communicate the value of law and order is by having police cars be visible in our society. Having police cars highly visible also distributes power because people are less likely to break the law with police nearby. People are less likely to speed, for example, if they see speed traps on the highway. Thus, one way the State distributes power nonverbally is by placing police cars—which also express law and order—along the highway.

This assignment calls for you to examine a specific nonverbal symbol and its ideological features. Examples of such symbols might include the American flag (or the burning of the American flag), a particular tattoo, runway supermodels, a Ferrari, perfect white teeth, a Barbie doll, or an engagement ring. The basic idea here is to examine how a nonverbal symbol both expresses values and beliefs and how it distributes power. The paper should answer first: What is the symbol and (briefly) its history?—and then 3 of the 4 following questions: (1) What particular set of values and beliefs does the symbol express? (2) How does the symbol demarcate communities? (3) How does the symbol distribute (or comment on) how power operates in this text? (4) How does the symbol function to either perpetuate or resist dominant values and beliefs? Your paper should be two full pages single-spaced and should exemplify your very best writing. On an assigned date you will present your analysis to the class with PowerPoint images: 5 minutes sharp. Your presentation should be interesting, incisive, and well-planned.

ORIGINAL CRITICAL ANALYSIS PAPER

Students of communication should be able to critically assess in sophisticated ways the texts of symbolic activity they encounter. This assignment charges students to apply a critical lens to some significant communication text. The purpose is to examine how a particular set of interests are being served via the strategic use of symbols. The questions—(1) whose interests are being served here? (2) via what specific text of symbols? and (3) how is this being accomplished?—should organize your writing. Follow closely the models on pages 6 and 7 of this syllabus. Again, I suggest rewriting your paper 3-4 times prior to submission.

RESPONSE PAPERS

You will have **four 3-4 page typed essays due in response to the question(s) given for the class period you choose**. They are due on that class period. Your lowest grade among the four response papers will be dropped. In these responses, I am asking you to make explicit connections between course materials, lived experience, and theory in order to critically analyze an issue. I have provided questions to guide your writing, but you may interrogate the readings or raise other questions that you feel like the readings do not address. Please be prepared to share in class if called upon to do so. Again, I am concerned with the amount of thought and logic put into your essay as well as the explicit connections (i.e. correct direct citation and paraphrasing of course materials) you make with course materials. Remember, if you are making an argument, back it up with proof whether it is from the readings for that day or from some other source. **I do not want opinion papers. I want discussions informed by theory and research.**

COMMUNICATION THEORY RESEARCH PAPER

Give these guidelines careful consideration; you may rearrange the order, but the points should be made in the essay.

- You will work with one topic and three theories
- Do a thorough job of explaining the situation to which you are interested in applying the theories
- Show me that you understand the theories
- Tell me about pertinent theorists—original and current
- Justify the selection of your theories for your particular topic
- What are the philosophical assumptions associated with each theory?
- Discuss how the theories apply to your designated situation
- What aspects of your topic are especially suited to the theories?
- Discuss points of overlap, divergence, and inapplicability
- In essence you are testing the theories' premises; so, how do they measure up?
- Is it a problem with the theory or with the application to this particular situation?
- What criteria support your analysis?
- What's your overall view of the efficacy of the theories selected?
- Is there any heuristic value in the theories?
- Concluding remarks (including innovative, creative thoughts of YOUR OWN), references, footnotes

Add your reflection page to the very end AFTER your references and footnotes.

THEORY INTO PRACTICE PAPER

This paper calls for the application of various theories on concepts that aid in our understanding of the complexities that come with being involved in an interracial romantic relationship. The purpose of this 8-10 page paper is to provide you the opportunity to express your thoughts and feelings about the film *Something New* and its role in addressing the issue of mate selection within the context of an interracial encounter. The guidelines for this paper will be posted and discussed at a later date in the semester.

MEDIA CRITIQUES

The purpose of these 4-5 page critical response papers is to facilitate critical thinking and observations about films and popular culture phenomena as they relate to socially constructed identities, including race, ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation. Using the following guidelines, each paper should provide a detailed description of your honest reaction to a video shown in class (Paper #1) and a phenomenon of your choice (Paper #2), making a specific link between them and the readings related to this course. The questions (forthcoming) outline the content to be addressed in the papers at bare minimum. Each student is responsible for submitting quality, substantive work that reflects her/his ability to think and write critically about each topic.

In the case of the documentary *Ethnic Notions*, the goal of the paper is to offer your critique of the film and its role in addressing the intersection between race, media representations, and communication. The questions presented below should function as a guide for organizing your thoughts about the film and its aim to capture the reality of the ways in which marginalized groups have been depicted for decades in North American television. According to California Newsreel, *Ethnic Notions* is "Marlon Riggs' Emmy-winning documentary that takes viewers on a disturbing voyage through American history, tracing for the first time the deep-rooted stereotypes which have fueled anti-black prejudice. Through these images we can begin to understand the evolution of racial consciousness in America." The purpose of viewing this film and self-reflecting on your experience with it is to provide an opportunity to critically think about the use of film as an educational tool and the implications it has for viewer consumption of mass media. Your critique is more than a reaction paper; it is an informed and well-developed critique of a visual text informed by social science research.

WEEKLY WRITING

Each week you will be required to submit a 2-4 page probe that synthesizes and comments upon the readings for that week. These probes should be replete with internal (citational) references and a bibliography. This is a writing exercise in critical analysis and theory building. The content can reflect a combination of specific texts, additional research, personal insights and class discussion. Papers will be due at the beginning of the class period. They will be graded A-F, based on the clarity and specificity of the arguments, articulation of the core elements of the articles, structure, form and presentation of ideas.

CHAPTER PRESENTATIONS

Each student will be required to thoroughly review and present at least one class reading during the quarter. The presentation should attempt to capture and foreground the significant aspects of the text. The presenter should use performance as methodology for sharing their understanding of the materials. This means that the student will engage performance as a way of showing what they know, engaging the audience with their embodied presentation of knowing. Within these performances students will attempt to capture of the major argument(s) of the text without literally replaying the language of the text. In addition each presenter will provide a detailed 1-page abstract of the article for each person in class.

ENGAGEMENTS

The purpose of engagements are to have you critically engage course readings and concepts on a small scale. Engagements will take many forms, including generating questions for class discussions, responding to questions I pose about readings, completing out of class exercises, writing short response papers, attending events and connecting them to class concepts….and so forth. You will complete approximately 10-12 engagements during the semester.

GROUP PRESENTATION

In groups of 3-4, you will work collaboratively to complete and present a research project about the role of gender in contemporary society. This project will require that you consider gender as we've conceptualized it in class and extend an understanding of gender by addressing issues (such as transnationalism, globalization, men's bodies, etc.) we have **not** covered during class. You will then work together to create a well-researched and creative presentation of your topic.

GROUP RESEARCH PAPER

In groups of 2-3, you will identity a topic relevant to the study of Culture and Diversity and collaboratively research the topic through a review of literature and field research. Completed studies will be presented in the form of a final research paper and class presentation. Points will be distributed across three assignments, including a research proposal (25 points), the class presentation (25 points) and the final research paper (100 points).

COMMUNITY ACTION PROJECT

The purpose of this project is for you to engage theories of social justice in an applied setting. The project may be developed individually or in groups (3 people maximum). You have a variety of options for this project, including (but not limited to) creating collaborating with community partners; analyzing how power, difference and identity are (re)presented at [the university]; designing and (partially) implementing a social justice curriculum (to name only a few). A core element of this assignment is to engage in social justice action designed to challenge systems of privilege and oppression in relationship to particular social groups—working to enhance intercultural interactions in your community(ies).

This project will be divided into four parts (specific guidelines for all four parts will be provided in class):

- *Proposal & Meeting:* In your groups, you will collaboratively define a project idea and connect that idea to published research. In 1-2 pages, you will describe your project goals, timeline, and research. I will provide you feedback and we will meet to discuss your proposal.
- *Public Performance*: In your groups, you will create research-based public presentations and implement those presentations at [the university].
- *Class Presentation*: In class, your group will present the results of your public performance, including the presentation of data gathered in the library as well as "in the field" as you engaged the public performance.
- *Analysis*: Individually, you will submit a paper analyzing your experience working with your group and the relevance of your work for social justice and communication.

CULTURAL POLICY DEBATE

Assuming the math works out, there will be no more than 3 people per team, and no more than four debates total. These debates are policy debates. One of the best

sources for deciding on a topic is the news. Some examples of policy debate topics in the past have been health insurance and healthcare for underrepresented groups, affirmative action; school desegregation; racial discrimination in housing and lending; racial discrimination in hiring and employment; race and sentencing in the criminal justice system; racial profiling; voting rights and racial redistricting; school vouchers; welfare reform; immigration policy; and right to know/open access. The topic is generally left to your discretion, however no topics may be duplicated by or overlap with one of your classmates and the topic must be significantly related to intercultural communication. It should not be a stretch for me to see how your topic is related to culture. There is no official final exam for this course. Your final written paper (related to research for the policy debate) and actual policy debate will serve that function.

You will be evaluated based on your ability to present your claims with clear support of existing literature. You must have detailed knowledge of the facts and be able to address counter-claims. Your research and available evidence are your most significant allies. Without that, you are simply speculating. You need to anticipate and prepare for opposition in the debate. The format and evaluation criteria for the debate will be discussed in class.

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